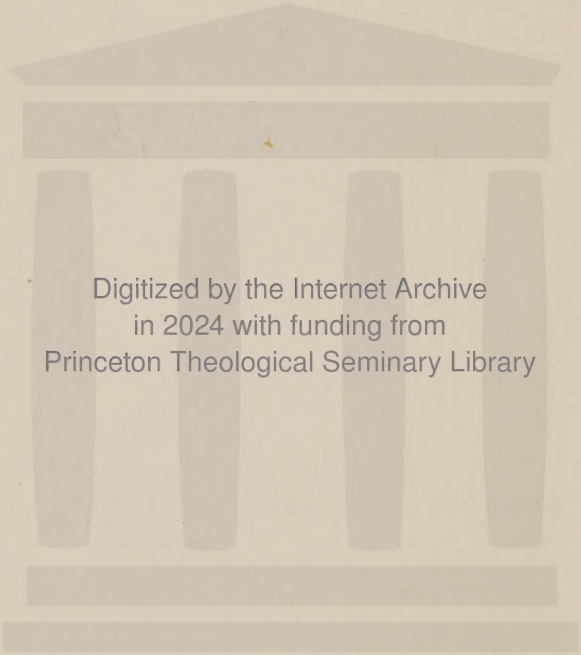


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HEDONISTIC THEORIES
FROM ARISTIPPUS TO SPENCER

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HEDONISTIC THEORIES

FROM ARISTIPPUS TO SPENCER

BY

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GLASGOW

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PREFACE.

In the following pages an attempt is made to give, in familiar and untechnical language, a critical account of Hedonistic Theories in their historical succession. I hope that even those who cannot accept my criticisms may find my expositions fairly satisfactory. For my own part I am convinced, as the result of this and other investigations, that no Hedonistic theory can plausibly explain morality without assuming ideas inconsistent with its asserted principle. What is here presented to the public has been in manuscript for several years, and I have been induced to publish it now as a needful supplement to the ethical part of my *Outline of Philosophy*. At the same time each work is complete in itself.

To obviate the necessity of continual foot-notes, I have relegated all references to authors to the end of the volume.

University of Queen's College,
Kingston, Canada,
26th April, 1895.

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HEDONISTIC THEORIES
FROM ARISTIPPUS TO SPENCER

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCE OF THE SOPHISTS ON GREEK THOUGHT

THE author of that clever but somewhat flippant satire, *The New Republic*, has made us familiar with the question, Is life worth living? That such a question should be put at all is a fact of great significance. The first tendency of man is to expend the pent-up energy with which he is endowed, in building up for himself an ordered world of customs, institutions, and laws. And what is true of the race is also true of the individual. A man throws himself into some active pursuit: the accumulation of a fortune for himself and his family, the ascent to political or social power, the achievement of fame as a man of science, an artist, or a thinker; but he assumes in all of these cases that what he seeks is worth striving for, and the life he lives worth living. When, therefore, we find an age or an individual "sitting down in a calm

moment to think," and when the thought takes the form of the question, What is the end of life? we may be sure that the energy and enthusiasm of youth is spent, and has been succeeded by the sober reflection of maturer years. But when the problem has assumed the sceptical form, Is there any worthy end of life at all? we cannot doubt that the age of faith is gone for ever.

Now, Mr. Mallock's question is of this sceptical character. When we ask, Is life worth living? we condense in one set of words two connected questions—(1) Is there an end of life? (2) If so, is it worth seeking? Will it bring satisfaction supposing it to be attained? To these questions some men, in point of fact, have answered, Happiness is doubtless the end which all men seek, but it is an end which no man ever has attained, or ever can attain. This despondent view of life is thus expressed by Shelley in his *Queen Mab*—

> "The flower that smiles to-day
> To-morrow dies;
> All that we wish to stay
> Tempts, and then flies:
> What is this world's delight?
> Lightning that mocks the night,
> Brief even as bright."

Byron puts the same thought into still more hopeless words—

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better not to be."

Nor is this view of life a plant of purely modern growth, for the chorus in the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles says that it is—

"Happiest beyond compare
Never to taste of life;
Happiest in order next,
Being born, with quickest speed
Thither again to turn
From whence we came,"

while the saying of Menander, "Whom the gods love die young," has all the familiarity of a proverb. The view of life embodied in these sayings of the poets has received careful philosophical expression at the hands of such thinkers as Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. "Human life," says the former, "oscillates between pain and ennui"; our conscious life, according to the latter, is one long disease, "in pain it is born, with pain it consumes itself, through pain it raises itself to a higher level; and what compensation does it offer for all this pain but a vain reflection of itself?"

It is not my intention to make a special examination into the basis of pessimism, and although I think it will be found, as the result of our inquiry, that it rests upon a fundamental

mistake, I have brought forward these sayings rather to show the necessity of a reasoned basis for the faith in absolute rules of conduct which we all tacitly assume. No doubt it is natural to regard such reflections upon human life as those which I have quoted as a proof of the futility of all speculation on the ultimate nature of things, and to draw from them the lesson that we must fall back upon simple and child-like faith. In his *Past and Present*, Carlyle passionately commends the ages of faith in comparison with the eager, questioning, critical age in which we ourselves live. But one answer to Carlyle's advice not to philosophize on the basis of conduct is that it is that most useless of all kinds of advice, that which cannot be followed. By refusing to inquire into the foundation of things we do not get rid of a theory of life, but may adopt a crude and uncritical one. It is no more possible to go back to the simple faith of an earlier age than to return to the spontaneous and abounding energy of earlier years, or, like Alice in Wonderland, to make and unmake one's stature at will. I will go further, and say, that not only can one not retain the simplicity of an earlier and less reflective age, but that it would not be good for us even if we could. Just as the innocence of the child must develop into the self-control of the man, so

criticism, the testing and founding of conduct on a reasoned basis, is essential to our full intellectual and moral stature. That faith is the most robust which

> "buildeth in the cedar's tops,
> And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

My aim shall therefore be, in the following pages, to take nothing for granted, to try all things, and, while stating as clearly and impartially as I can the views of those thinkers in ancient and modern times who have said that pleasure is the end of life, to "hold fast that which is good" in their doctrine, and to reject that which is false.

I have decided to consider hedonism in its historical development, rather than to discuss its abstract basis, because as a rule the earlier form of hedonism is also the simplest, and because nothing so well enables us to grasp a truth as to see it from the most various points of view. It has been suggested that some of the prejudices of Englishmen are due to the fact that they live on an island; and at least we may say that in the realm of thought as of practical life, "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits." Such a critical account of hedonism would seem to be an impertinence were Mr. Herbert Spencer right in saying that all theories of human conduct, wittingly or unwittingly, must from the nature of the case

assume pleasure to be the end of life. Even the pessimist, when he says that life is not worth living, bases his proof, according to Mr. Spencer, on the assumption that the end is "a surplus of agreeable feeling." He condemns life because it results in more pain than pleasure. The optimist defends life in the belief that it brings more pleasure than pain. The implication common to their antagonistic views is, that conduct should conduce to preservation of the individual, of the family, and of the society, only supposing that life brings more happiness than misery. This "short and easy method" with the opponents of hedonism is not so convincing as Mr. Spencer seems to think. For the pessimist may hold that as a matter of fact life brings more pain than pleasure, while maintaining that not pleasure but something infinitely higher is the end of life. You will of course understand that I do not intend these remarks to be taken as a disproof of the hedonistic end, but only as a disproof of Mr. Spencer's attempt to snatch a hasty verdict in favour of hedonism, by an unwarrantable interpretation of theories which differ from his own.

Having thus cleared the way, we may now go on to consider the hedonistic theories of Ancient Greece. The first set of thinkers who can be called hedonistic, in tendency at least, is that re-

markable group of men called the Sophists. It is true that in them hedonism was implicit rather than explicit, but yet they were so instrumental in preparing the way for the Cyrenaics, who expressly formulated hedonism, that no consideration of this type of thought as it existed in Greece would be complete that failed to take note of their extraordinary influence in the development of philosophical reflection. To estimate that influence aright we must know something of the form of society and the modes of thought and feeling characteristic of Ancient Greece.

In the fifth century before the Christian era, the Greeks had developed from their early condition into a number of city commonwealths, all of which were, at least in idea, absolutely independent. When we speak of the Greek people we must never forget that the bond uniting them was mainly that of a common religion and a common tongue. Politically each city, with its immediately surrounding territory, formed an independent State. The idea of a vast region united by the bond of a common polity was quite foreign to the mind of the Greek. His country was not a region but a city. Hence freedom to the Greek meant something different from what it means to us. To be a freeman was to have the rights and privileges of a citizen. For as the State was small it was possible for the

whole body of citizens to assemble for political purposes in one place. In Attica the whole number of citizens does not seem ever to have exceeded 30,000. Such a thing as representative government was undreamt of by the Greek; his idea of citizenship was to take part personally in the high matters discussed in the assembly of the people, to fill the offices of state, to take his place as one of the judges in the courts of law, or to offer up public sacrifices. Hence the franchise was jealously guarded and limited. A freeman, a foreigner, or a dependent ally was in no case admitted to citizenship unless by a special decree of the assembly of the people. Each Greek State was thus like a number of mutually repellent atoms. There was no means of compressing a number of cities into one body. Either a city must be absolutely free or it must be dependent upon another. No doubt, at a very early period, Eleusis, Marathon, and the other small towns of Attica were independent before they were absorbed by Athens, but the whole of Attica was comparatively small in extent. Sparta, with a larger territory, held the Laconian towns in complete subjection, and Boeotia was regarded by her so-called Attica as a tyrant.

What we find then in Greece is a crowd of little city commonwealths, each independent

and sovereign, and each united by the common ties of blood, language, manners, and religion. It will be readily understood that direct participation in public affairs afforded the citizens of a State like Athens the highest political education. An ordinary citizen in democratic Athens had more power than an ordinary English member of parliament; he had not only the right to speak in the assembly, but he was called upon to vote even upon such important matters as declaring war or making peace. And not only was the Greek State a city, not a nation; not only were the people at once parliament and government, but there was no distinction as with us between Church and State: the form of religion was under the control of the people, and its acceptance or rejection was regarded as a part of their political function. Hence we find Aristophanes saying that the Athenians had converted Athens into Egypt by their facility in admitting strange gods, while Anaxagoras and Protagoras were banished, the former for saying that the sun was a red-hot ball about the size of the Peloponnesus, the latter, because he had said "Whether there are gods I cannot tell: life is too short for such obscure problems"; and Socrates, one of the most pious as well as the most thoughtful of men, was condemned to death on a charge of corrupting the

minds of the youth and denying the gods of his country. The result of this active participation in affairs of state was an intense and yet narrow patriotism. The walls, temples, and theatre of Athens were regarded by each citizen as his own; and it is not wonderful that in its best days a man was glad to die for the great name of Athens.

But this intensity of life had its weak side. For one thing, those who were not allowed to take part in war or politics were thrust into the background, and hence the family life of the Greek was largely sacrificed to the public good. Further, as a small city cannot be continually recruited by new blood, it gradually loses its vigour, especially in times of prosperity, and exhibits symptoms of senility and decay. Moreover, to the intensity of patriotism corresponds an intensity of hatred of other States, and hence we find that war was carried on with a fierceness and a cruelty to which we are happily unaccustomed in modern times. The very smallness of the arena led to intense bitterness of party warfare, and to the perpetual expulsion of the leaders of defeated factions. But the source of the greatest weakness of the ancient State was the fact that it rested upon slavery. The greatest work of Greece was done during the two centuries

that ended with the close of the Peloponnesian war. Seeing the great results that were achieved by means of it, such humane philosophers as Plato and Aristotle accepted the institution of slavery and only sought to ameliorate the condition of the slave. In Attica there were over 400,000 slaves and aliens and only some 30,000 citizens. Raised on the shoulders of this immense servile population, who were engaged chiefly in menial tasks, a small body of citizens was left free to devote their energies to war and politics, or, in later times, to literature and art. For a time the rate of progress was wonderful, but after the repulse of the barbarian hosts of Persia, moral and political corruption set in, the fire of intellect gradually burnt itself out, and when St. Paul came to Athens he found its people a set of refined gossips, with no originality, no faith, and no enthusiasm. What has just been said may help to explain the influence of the Sophists. They acted as a solvent of Greek thought by destroying men's faith in what had been accepted as a sort of divine revelation of what was right and just. The main idea common to them all was that customary morality was not absolute, but was a fair subject of discussion and criticism. The very simplicity of Greek thought made it peculiarly liable to scepticism the moment the

sanction of a supposed divine authority was withdrawn from it.

To a man, in our own day, who thinks and who insists upon having a connected view of things, it is apparent that individual, social, and political morality are one and inseparable, and that law and morality as a whole ultimately rest upon and are explained by religion. But the complexity of modern life is so great, and the various forms of organization so many and distinct, that often a man will act in different spheres in ways quite inconsistent with one another. The man who in private life is considerate and unselfish may in his public life display all the rancour and bitterness of faction; he may practically deny that the nation should be guided by the same principles of morality as are binding on the individual; or he may separate morality from religion or religion from morality, not seeing that these are two sisters

> "That doat upon each other, friends to man,
> Living together under the same roof,
> And never can be sunder'd without tears."

The danger to the Greek mind was of an opposite character. As the State was all in all, and gathered up in itself the various functions now separately discharged by the club, the university, the church, the municipality, and the state, to

touch traditional beliefs at one point was to touch them in all. An attack on the sanctity of public law sent a shock through the whole body politic. To say that a time-honoured custom had no support but convention seemed to the Greek as impious as to sneer at the god of his country. The Greek mind referred the institutions and customs of the State to divine appointment. Noble families believed that they could trace their descent from a god or god-like hero. Herodotus, in telling the thrilling story of how the three hundred Spartans kept the pass of Thermopylae against overwhelming odds, pauses to trace the genealogy of Leonidas back to Hercules. Thus the popular mind could even less than now distinguish between the form and the substance of religion or grasp the idea that, from its very nature as dealing with the Infinite, religion cannot without degradation be identified with the rites and ceremonies of a particular people. The mythological stories of the gods and heroes seemed to have the same sacredness as the laws and customs of the State; to cast doubt on the popular creed was to destroy the State itself, for the Greek State could only survive so long as its citizens had implicit faith in their own as the only perfect form of constitution.

Now the Sophists from their very mode of life

were to a large extent free from the narrow patriotism of the ordinary Greek citizen. They went about from one city to another earning a living by teaching, and thus they learned to look upon the customs and institutions of different States without the superstitious reverence felt for them by their own citizens. In Athens they found the best field for their operations, and yet hardly one of them was an Athenian citizen. It was therefore perfectly natural, viewing the constitution of the State in which for the time they resided in the "dry light of the understanding," that they should, by the tone of their teaching, produce scepticism as to the divine authority of the established religion and morality.

Scepticism is the natural result of the denial of external authority, so long as it is not seen that ultimately nothing is right that does not rest upon reason, and is capable of justifying itself to reason. Now the Sophists did not seek for any such reasoned system of conduct to replace the customary morality whose sacredness they had destroyed. Like Faust they had "destroyed the beautiful world" of faith, but they did not take heed to follow the advice of the poet to "build it up in their minds again." They were not constructive, but purely sceptical thinkers, and it is for this reason that Plato and Aristotle find their mode

of thought so objectionable. It is no doubt true, as Grote says, that they were, as a rule, men of high personal character; but it is not the less true that their teaching was purely destructive in its tendency. But the Sophists would have had very little influence had not the public mind been prepared for their teaching by its own independent development. The true sceptic, as Plato said, was that great Sophist the public.

Greece was less able to bear prosperity than adversity. The victories of Marathon and Salamis generated in the mind of the people a proud self-reliance and a thirst for glory and power that carried them beyond the narrow grooves in which they had been wont to move. Especially was this the case in Athens and among the allies of Athens in Syracuse and other Sicilian colonies. The mere fact that the whole body of the people came to have a direct voice in the high concerns of the State inevitably produced a type of mind keen, eager, and disputatious. A people accustomed to hear the best orators of the day in the assembly, and to practise the cross-examination of witnesses in the public law-courts, was prepared for the overthrow of customary beliefs when a serious attack was made upon them. And we must remember that the religion of Greece, which lent an adventitious sanction to current moral ideas, was

itself the product of imagination, and was doomed to fall the moment men could distinguish between poetry and prose. Add to this that Greek political morality had gradually degenerated under the influence of the civil discords fomented by the conflict of Athens and Sparta, while in Athens, at least, with the great plague of 430 B.C., a similar corruption of private morality had set in, and it is not difficult to see that the soil was ready for the seed of doubt and of superficial culture which it was the work of the Sophists to scatter.

The teaching of the Sophists consisted in casuistry and rhetoric.

(1) Their casuistry took various forms, but its general tendency was to effect the dissolution of customary morality by showing that it was open to numerous exceptions. A favourite contrast of the Sophists was between nature and custom. Protagoras drew attention to the fact that the object of perception varies with the state of the subject. What to one man is hot to another is cold, and the same thing appears different even to the same individual at different times. It is a man's sensations, therefore, that for him are the measure of reality. Similarly Protagoras seems to have held that morality rests upon convention, not upon nature. The laws and customs of a State are simply rules which men have

agreed to observe for their mutual advantage. Hippias, on the other hand, opposed nature to convention. The laws of a people, he argued, cannot be absolute, because no two States have the same idea of right and wrong. It seemed to him that the source of division and discord among men was to be found in their unjust laws.

However different is the point of view of those two Sophists, they are agreed in condemning the popular belief in the divine authority and unchangeability of customary morality. The half-unconscious scepticism of Protagoras and Hippias is outdone by the bold and open scepticism of Gorgias, who deliberately argues that knowledge is impossible and morality merely a useful convention. It is only a step further to say, with Thrasymachus, that morality is nothing but the laws imposed upon others by those who rule for their own selfish advantage, a doctrine which is on a par with the favourite view of the sceptics of the last century that religion is an invention of the priests to keep the people in subjection to the church.

(2) The natural tendency of the doctrine that law and morality are purely conventional was to take away the basis of external authority on which it had hitherto rested, without laying down any more solid basis in place of that which had been removed. The positive teaching

of the Sophists consisted mainly of an art of rhetoric, enabling its possessor to make the most of his case in the assembly, or in the courts of law. The rhetorical culture of the Sophists was independent of any special knowledge, and therefore tended to generate an intellectual insolence that to Socrates and his great disciple Plato seemed antagonistic to the reverent spirit of the true philosopher. Not that there was anything positively immoral. The pupil of the Sophist was not so bad as the modern political demagogue, the sensational preacher, or the omniscient reviewer who, after a glance at the preface and the table of contents, blames without stint a book that has cost its author years of labour. The tendency of purely instrumental culture is to make truth seem the plaything of words, and from this point of view we can understand how Carlyle should have said: "Good speaker, eloquent speaker, but what if he does not speak the truth!" For, after all, what a man says is more important than how he says it, to discover truth is a nobler thing than to confuse and bewilder an antagonist, and the solitary thinker is in the long run of more service to the world than the pretentious rhetorician, who gains the ear of the mob by a mastery over the art of making the worse appear the better reason.

CHAPTER II

ARISTIPPUS THE CYRENAIC

In the former chapter I tried to explain the character of the Greek as distinguished from the modern State, and to show how it was that the Sophists came to have so great an influence on Greek thought. The Greek State was a city, not a nation. It was an organic unity, but a unity of a comparatively simple character. As there was in it no distinction of religion and politics, social and individual morality, doubt of the laws and customs of a particular State led to doubt of all the most cherished beliefs of the people. Even among ourselves the plain man, who has been accustomed to regard morality as resting upon divine enactment, feels as if he were cut loose from his moorings and were drifting helplessly into an unknown sea, when doubt is cast upon some article of his religious faith, or when a fundamental law of society, as it has hitherto

existed, is called in question. Beliefs that are supposed to rest upon external authority seem to lose all their sacredness and validity when that authority is denied. Hence the Sophists, in maintaining that morality did not rest upon divine authority but upon the arbitrary will of the people, seemed to the Greek of a conservative type to be the tearing up of society from its roots, and to be opening a way for absolute anarchy. At the same time the natural progress of the Greek people, and especially of Athens, the most enlightened of all Greek States, had unconsciously prepared the soil for scepticism, otherwise the Sophists would very soon have found Athens too hot for them, and would have been compelled, like several of the earlier philosophers who denied the popular religion, to beat a hasty retreat.

What view, then, are we to take of the teaching of the Sophists? Must we regard their scepticism as an unmixed evil? I have already indicated that, in my opinion, the work they did was a work that had to be done. If progress is to be made, men's uncritical belief in what is must be shaken to its centre. The negative or critical movement of thought is as essential as the positive or constructive. First constructive, next destructive, and then reconstructive is the triple

movement by means of which man has developed. At the same time we cannot bless the Sophists altogether. Their scepticism in regard to external authority was justifiable, not so their contentment with scepticism as the last word. We may even say that they were not thorough enough in their scepticism. It was good to deny the absoluteness of the laws and customs of this or that State, but it was not good to base morality upon a new sort of external authority, the arbitrary agreement of a particular people. The next step must therefore be to work out to its legitimate issue the principle that law and morality are the product of the individual will, and to prove an articulate theory of conduct on that basis.

This was attempted by the Cyrenaics, the intellectual heirs of the Sophists. The views of the Sophists were not put into a definite and well defined shape, and that is one of the reasons why Grote has been able to show, with a good deal of plausibility, that they had no common philosophical creed, but were merely men of unusual culture and intelligence, who devoted themselves to the task of teaching the young. It is quite true that they did not form a school of philosophy in the same sense in which we can speak of the school of Plato, or Locke, or Kant. There were no precisely formulated principles on which all

were agreed, and by which each was willing to be tested. But the want of such definite principles is one of the charges which we bring against them. They were sceptical without clearly apprehending how sceptical they really were. There is no difficulty in finding a modern parallel. Many a clever newspaper editor or magazine writer will tell you that he does not trouble himself to find any philosophical basis for morality or religion, not seeing that he is virtually committing himself to the indefensible position, that society and conduct rest upon no foundation of ascertainable truth. For if, as is implied, it is hopeless to seek for truth, is it not plain that all is a matter of individual opinion, and that we "live in a vain show"? Now the Cyrenaics, whatever we may think of their doctrine, at least had a doctrine. They were not content with hazy views about the nature of morality, but had the full courage of their opinions, and sought to give them a precise formulation satisfactory to the critical intellect.

(1) The first thing in which they show their superiority to the Sophists is in affirming that there is one single end which all men seek, and by reference to which every action must be judged. This notion of a supreme end of life was no doubt borrowed from Socrates, who was the

first thinker to grasp it clearly. It is difficult for us who are familiar with the idea to appreciate its importance in the history of human thought. It was as instrumental in introducing unity into men's conceptions of human life as the idea of gravitation in uniting all the phenomena of nature in the bond of an all-pervasive law. Previously reflection had not got beyond the point of view, that conduct consists of certain practical rules which it is useful to practise. Socrates showed that men's actions must be consciously or unconsciously guided by their desire for something which they regard as desirable, and that these rules are simply the different ways in which, as they believe, this one desirable end may be attained. A man will not respect the gods unless he desires to obtain their approbation; he will not act justly without being convinced that just acts will bring satisfaction; he will not obey the laws of his country unless he believes that such obedience is a good; when he seeks for knowledge he tacitly assumes that it is a thing to be desired to make one wise. Thus, in every case, it is implied that there is some desirable end, and it therefore becomes an important question what that end is. The Cyrenaics, in affirming with Socrates that there is a single end which all men seek, were distinctly in advance of the Sophists, who merely

said that the special enactments of each State rested upon convention.

(2) The Cyrenaics were also in advance of the Sophists in formulating the doctrine that knowledge is merely what appears to each man to be true, and in giving definite reasons for denying that we can have any knowledge of things in themselves. Protagoras, indeed, had said that the perceptions of a man vary according to his state at the time, so that the same thing may be at one time hot and at another time cold. Gorgias went further and said that we can know nothing of the real nature of things, but neither of these eminent Sophists tried to justify his contention by showing that it rests upon a law of human thought.

Aristippus, on the other hand, with the true philosophical instinct which leads a man never to be satisfied until he has found the principle on which his statements are based, tried to show that what we call knowledge is reducible to the immediate convictions or feelings of the individual man. His proof of the individualism of knowledge was something like this: When I say that a piece of sugar is sweet and white, what I really mean is that it is sweet to my palate, and white to my eyesight. People say that the sugar is sweet and white, but their language is wanting in philosophical precision. There are people who have

no sense of taste, and people who cannot distinguish one colour from another. Now if the sweetness or the whiteness were in the object, the object would be sweet and white to every one and at all times. The inference is obvious, that we do not know what is the nature of the object in itself. We are certainly aware of our own feelings. When we taste or see a piece of sugar we do not confuse sweetness with sourness, or white with black. But this is very different from saying that the sugar is sweet and white, not sour and black. Again, while I am aware of my feelings when I have them, I am not aware of the feelings of any one else. I taste sugar and say "this is sweet"; you taste it and say also that it is sweet. But how can I prove to you, or you to me, that we both *mean* the same thing when we use the same word 'sweet.' I cannot enter into your mind and become conscious of the actual feeling which you have when you say 'sweet,' you cannot enter into my mind and contemplate what goes on there. We use common *names*, but such a thing as a common *feeling* is an impossibility. A feeling shared in common would not be a feeling, it would in fact be an *object* of feeling to each of us, and each man's consciousness of it would be a feeling, hence we should be landed in the same difficulty again, for

you and I should both be aware or have a feeling of that common feeling. Since then we cannot possibly get beyond our own individual feelings, it is useless to talk about the nature of things. And from this Aristippus drew the inference, a perfectly correct inference from his premises, that the study of nature is a useless form of activity. The only study worthy of a man is the study of man, *i.e.* of the feelings of the individual.

Now I can easily imagine some one saying softly to himself, "What fools these philosophers be! They would persuade us out of our very senses. Common-sense at once sets aside all such elaborate trifling, it refuses to be taken in by nonsense, and sticks to facts." And so the man who plumes himself on his common-sense—by which he means his *un*common-sense—dismisses the whole problem and falls back on his unreasoned convictions. I am not going to defend the individualism of the Cyrenaics. I hope to show, by and by, that their theory of knowledge rests upon an imperfect analysis of sensation, even from their own point of view. But at this point I merely wish to say that the Sophists' view of knowledge, and much more the Cyrenaic view, is distinctly in advance of the common-sense view. It would be in advance were it for nothing else than

that it is an *attempt* to explain the facts. If we are to have a reasoned basis for our ideas we must begin by subjecting everything which we have been accustomed to regard as true and sacred to the most thorough criticism.

And hence Protagoras, in drawing attention to the varying character of our sensible perceptions, took one step beyond common-sense, while Aristippus, in reducing our knowledge of things to each man's immediate consciousness of his own feelings, took a second and a more important step. To the assumption of the unreflective mind that each of us directly apprehends cold and heat, sweet and bitter, hard and soft, as they are in things, it was a perfectly legitimate objection to say that that cannot be so, because of two different persons one calls the same thing hot and the other cold; and it was a fair inference from this, that the thing in itself is neither hot nor cold, but that heat and cold are feelings or states of the individual subject. In fact, not only do the whole of the philosophical progeny of the Sophists and Cyrenaics—our Lockes, Humes, Mills, and Spencers—agree in denying that hot and cold, hard and soft, etc., are in things as they are felt by us, but they go even further, and deny that there are any properties of things corresponding to such feelings at all.

(3) The third point of distinction is that the Cyrenaics expressly defined the end to be the pleasure of the individual man. The Sophists denied that there were any actions which could be said to be absolute and unchangeable, but they did not advance to the logical consequence of such a doctrine, viz., that as law and morality are the product of an expressed or tacit compact between individuals, there must be some point of agreement between individuals, something which induces them to enter into the contract. What is that point of agreement? What is the end which all the members of a community alike are aiming at? The Cyrenaics, definitively raising the question, went on to give a perfectly explicit answer to it. The end, they said, is individual pleasure.

And manifestly no other answer would have been consistent with the theory of knowledge which they had adopted. If I know nothing about the nature of things as they are in themselves, if I know nothing of the character of the feelings of others, but must simply assume that they are of the same character as my own, my action must be regulated by my own feelings, and by nothing else. Why do I refrain from taking my neighbour's property? Must it not be because my feelings revolt against theft, because it would give me pain to do it? Why do I show kindness to

another, if not because in doing so I feel a glow of pleasure? If a man in acting justly or benevolently always felt not pleasure but pain, is it conceivable that he would act justly or benevolently? Surely a man will do what he believes will bring him satisfaction or pleasure. The end of all action, then, must be the attainment of agreeable feeling.

Let us look more closely at this doctrine. Our experience as individuals is always of our own feelings. The Cyrenaics, in seeking to establish their hedonistic theory of the end, begin by describing the nature of those feelings which lead to action as distinguished from those which stand to us for the properties of things.

I. All feeling, whether it takes the form of sensation or the form of desire, is a sort of movement. The movement may be either (1) gentle and equable, or (2) rough and violent, or (3) so weak as to be almost imperceptible. To this three-fold division of feeling correspond the three states of (*a*) Pleasure, (*b*) Pain, (*c*) Indifference. The Cyrenaics evidently run together the idea of a movement of the organism and the consciousness of which that movement is the condition. We may illustrate their meaning by the contention of Mr. Haweis in his "Music and Morals," that to every emotion there corresponds a mechanical vibration which is swifter

or slower according as the emotion is more or less intense.

II. Which of these three sorts of feeling do people as a matter of fact desire? Manifestly the first. No one desires pain, no one desires that state of feeling in which there is neither pleasure nor pain, but every one desires pleasure, and if it were possible he would wish to have nothing but pleasure. Unless we suppose all men to be totally perverted in their nature, the good must be identical with pleasant, the evil with painful, the indifferent with some neutral state of feeling. The Cyrenaics, then, appeal to the experience of every one in support of their contention that pleasure alone is desirable. As a matter of fact, they say, all men do seek pleasure, all men do avoid pain, and to neutral feelings all men are indifferent. And you will find, as we go on, that this appeal to experience, this attempt to show that hedonism is a doctrine, based upon fact, is a claim made by the modern as well as the ancient exponents of the doctrine.

Without anticipating what has to be said about modern hedonism, I may quote, by way of illustration, the words of John Stuart Mill. "No reason," he says, "can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own

happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good, that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons." Of course Mill's theory is much more developed than the theory of the Cyrenaics; in particular, it draws a broad distinction between the happiness or pleasure of the individual and the happiness or pleasure of the community as a whole, but yet it rests the proof that pleasure is the end on an appeal to each individual to say whether he does not, as a matter of fact, regard pleasure as the one thing desirable.

Let us then grant to the Cyrenaic, by way of argument, these three positions—(1) that we are, and can only be, conscious of our own individual feelings; (2) that the feelings which incite us to action are either pleasurable, or painful, or neutral; and (3) that every one does, in point of fact, desire pleasure, and by his very nature cannot desire anything else; that he does and cannot but seek to avoid pain, and that he is indifferent to a feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful. The next question is this: Admitting that the good which our nature prompts us to seek is pleasure, and the evil which our nature causes us to avoid

is pain, while we are indifferent to neutral feeling, what is the highest good? how shall we *obtain* the end of which we are in search? We certainly *desire* pleasure, but we may seek it in a wrong way, and so may fail to secure it. What, then, is the right way to seek it? The answer of Aristippus is perfectly plain and unambiguous. Some thinkers had said that pleasure is not a positive feeling at all; that it is merely the sense of repose or tranquillity, which ensues upon relief from pain. Thus a man who is thirsty feels pleasure when his thirst is allayed by a glass of water; a man who has taken a long walk experiences a feeling of relief when he sits down to rest; a man, who has been closely confined to his room for a number of hours, experiences a feeling of elation when he goes out into the fresh air and puts his cramped muscles into active play. But Aristippus will not admit that pleasure is of this negative character, it is not mere relief from pain, but something positive. Nor, again, does he mean that the pleasure at which we are to aim is the greatest amount of pleasure that can be extracted from life on the whole. That is a conception which belongs to a later and more developed stage of hedonism. The pleasure which, if we are wise, we shall seek, is the pleasure which lies directly in our way. Our aim must

be to snatch the pleasure of the passing moment. Away with all vain regrets for vanished joys, and equally vain anticipations of joys to be! The past is beyond recall, and the future turns out quite different from what we expected it to be. Sufficient unto the day is the pleasure thereof. This view is not inaptly expressed by Horace, in words thus paraphrased by Allan Ramsay—

> "Let neist day come as it thinks fit,
> The present minute's only ours;
> On pleasure let's employ our wit,
> And laugh at fortune's feckless powers."

Is there, then, no such thing as pleasure which is intrinsically evil in its nature? Aristippus plainly answers that to call any pleasure an evil is a contradiction in terms. Pleasure is always a good and always desirable. People suppose that pleasures differ in their nature because they proceed from different sources. Thus it is said that the pleasures of the mind are higher than the pleasures of the body. But there is no ground for such a distinction. All pleasure is of the same nature as a feeling, no matter what the source from which it comes. Nor is it a valid ground of distinction to say that the pleasure which certain persons receive from the violation of law and custom are evil in their nature. Because a man receives pleasure from running counter to law and

custom, that is no reason for saying that the pleasure is bad, although it may be a sufficient reason for condemning his action. We have now before us the hedonistic view of life in its first and, so to speak, unsophisticated form. The qualifications and explanations which it afterwards received at the hands of Aristippus himself, and of other thinkers of the Cyrenaic school, gave it a much greater degree of subtlety and plausibility, but they destroyed its natural vigour and simplicity. It will therefore be most profitable to examine it in its original and simpler form.

1. When we consider the advance made by the Cyrenaics beyond the Sophists, we cannot fail to be struck by the wonderful self-developing power of a new thought. Ideas, as Luther said, are "living things with hands and feet." A man strikes out a new idea the force of which he only half comprehends, and which he holds along with a mass of older ideas inconsistent with it; other men take hold of it, turn it round and round, looking at it on all sides, and lo! before they are aware, it has changed under their eyes. So it was with the germinal idea of the Sophists, that law and morality are the rules which a particular state regards as most advantageous for itself. In the mind of Protagoras this thought no more carried with

it the destruction of all authority than the similar idea of the so-called "practical" man of to-day, that the great thing in life is to "get on," or the favourite view of the politician that the aim of statesmanship is to keep his party in power. In the one case as in the other a man persuades himself, and usually persuades others, that the principle on which he acts is perfectly compatible with the sanctity of human life, and with the stability of society and of the state. But history, more logical than the individual, insists on carrying out an idea to its consequences. If law and morality proceed from the shifting opinions of the people, what is that but to say that it has no foundation other than the immediate convictions of an aggregate of individuals. The individuals comprising the state may so far effect a compromise as to agree to a certain curtailment of their immediate desires, but to one who presses home this question, Why should a man obey the laws of his country? there can be but one answer: he should obey them because it will be best for himself.

Thus, in the realm of thought at least, which is usually freer from the spirit of compromise than the realm of practice, individualism comes to reign supreme; after the unformulated individualism of a Protagoras we have the formulated individualism

of a Thrasymachus. But even yet thought has not done its perfect work. If society is nothing but "anarchy plus the street constable," if the fear of law is "the hangman's whip to haud the wretch in order," we must seize firmly and clearly the twin principles, that knowledge is what each man finds in his own sensible perception, and morality the desire for pleasure on the part of the individual man. Hence we have the Cyrenaic reduction of all we know and all we do to feeling. Individualism in no longer implicit but explicit; it is no longer "wrapt in a robe of rhetoric" but stands forth naked and unashamed before the eyes of all men.

2. Are we then compelled to adopt the Cyrenaic view of knowledge? Is there no escape from the doctrine that a man's sensations are but the mirage of reality? That there is no escape on the principle of individualism is demonstrable. It is certain that my feelings are not as feelings identical with those of anybody else, and if I am absolutely limited in my knowledge to my feelings I cannot say that the nature of the object is such as it appears to me to be. So far we must commend the consistency of Aristippus. His scepticism is the legitimate outcome of the Protagorean theory of the sensible.

One cannot both "have his cake and eat it" in the realm of thought any more than in actual life.

It will not do to say with Protagoras that the thing changes with the changing sensations of the individual, and yet to talk as if we could know things as they are. But Aristippus, while he is in advance of Protagoras, makes a remarkable oversight. He fails to distinguish between such properties as colour, taste, heat, sound, and smell, as states of the organism, and properties like extension, motion, and weight, which are not dependent for their character upon the organism. His objection to the possibility of a knowledge of the properties of things is perfectly general. A man puts a finger of either hand into the same water, and the one feels hot, the other cold, but the water cannot be both hot and cold, therefore we do not know the real properties of things at all. Such is the reasoning of Aristippus. Bnt it rests upon a fallacy. It is quite possible, as Locke has said, that colour and taste, etc., are merely sensations in us, to which nothing in the object corresponds, while yet extension and weight are apprehended by us just as they exist in the object. Colour or sound, he will tell you, does not exist in external nature as it seems to do, but is merely the effect of the movement of certain minute particles of matter. The infinite number of atoms comprising the sun are thrown into violent agitation, a wave movement thrills along the ethereal medium and strikes upon

the eye, in response to which a vibration flies along the ocular nerve to the brain and there calls up the sensation of a luminous body. But while light is thus a feeling in the percipient subject, there could be no such feeling unless there were extended moving material particles.

This is the general view of the man of science. I do not vouch for its absolute correctness, but at least it draws a distinction that lay beyond the ken of Aristippus. Until it is shown that extension, mobility, and weight are not properties of things but are only our way of apprehending things, knowledge cannot be said to be purely of appearance, and should the distinction between colour and extension, light and motion, hardness and weight, be done away, the next question will be whether the sensationalist can consistently speak of *things* at all. I shall not follow out this line of thought further, because it is with the theory of conduct of the Cyrenaics that we have mainly to deal, not with their theory of knowledge. So much it seemed necessary to say, because hedonism rests upon the assumption that the mind may be resolved into a number of individual feelings; but having seen that the matter is not so simple as Aristippus supposed, we may now go on to ask how far the theory that pleasure is the mainspring of human action holds good.

3. Pleasure is the one thing desirable, pain is the one thing objectionable, and all else is desirable or undesirable according as pleasure or pain is associated with it. In support of this contention each man is bid to look into his own breast, and to say if he ever desired pain, or even the absence of all feeling; and if he would not prefer, were it possible, to be continually in a state of pleased enjoyment. Hence it is concluded that pleasure must be the end. It is very important that we should see clearly all that is implied in this appeal to experience. Observe that Aristippus says not merely that every one desires pleasure and avoids pain, but he says that he *cannot desire anything else.* But may we not admit that men desire pleasure, without admitting that there is nothing higher than pleasure which they desire still more?

Mark well the logical consequences of the assertion that pleasure is the end of life. It means not merely that, *other things being equal*, men do and ought to seek pleasure, but that, *whether other things are equal or not*, they do and ought to seek it. That is to say, that if there is a conflict between one's love of pleasure and the demands of others, the former must and ought to prevail, unless it so happens that a man will get more pleasure by considering others than

by considering only himself. A poor man, for example, with the same craving for pleasure as the rich, works hard from morning to night to provide food and clothing and shelter for his wife and family, and we must conclude, on the principles of Aristippus, that he does so because he gets pleasure from doing it, not because he desires the well-being of his wife and family. The pleasure of the man himself is first, the good of others second. But there are such persons as tramps and loafers, who take more pleasure in leading a lazy, shiftless, vagabond life than in submitting to the life of the hard-working husband and father. What are we to say of the loafer? He also, let us say, has a wife and family; will he take pleasure in working for them? By no means: that is the "last infirmity" of ignoble minds; he will almost rather starve himself. The loafer then takes his pleasure in loafing. But he is doing just what the hedonistic Aristippus tells him to do. It is useless to say to him "go and dig—for pleasure"; the prospect has no charms for his miserable soul; you may talk to him of a starving wife and family, but he is much more affected by his own craving for whisky, and in that he will seek his pleasure. Instances need not be multiplied. The statesman and the demagogue, the upright and the unscrupulous

tradesman, the honest and the time-serving workman, the respectable and the licentious man, all as we must suppose are seeking for pleasure, and for nothing else. The end is pleasure, and each in his own way is aiming at it, and aiming at nothing else. It is true that pleasure may sometimes be found, sometimes not, but that does not change the character of the motive. There is no end but pleasure which a man does seek or should seek, and therefore the actions of everybody are morally on the same level. Virtue and vice are unmeaning terms. I do *not* think that this can be a true theory.

4. The end, according to Aristippus, is pleasure. But pleasure may not be found if we seek it in a wrong way. By a "wrong way," Aristippus does not mean of course *morally* wrong, but only wrong in the sense that we may defeat our own end. How then is pleasure to be found? By excluding all reflection, and making the most of the present moment. The "pale cast of thought" must not be allowed to diminish our joy by giving rise to vain regrets for the past, or vain anticipations of pain or pleasure in the future. As Byron, in his mocking way, puts it—

> "*Carpe diem*, Juan, *carpe*, *carpe*,
> To-morrow sees another race as gay
> And transient, and devoured by the same harpy."

But (1) the theory virtually admits that to obtain the end we must not seek it. We desire pleasure, but when we set about getting it, we are compelled to entertain unwelcome and unexpected guests. He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The more we reflect on the past and forecast the future the less contented we are. Let us "take the goods the gods provide" us, and make the most of them. Self-restraint in the matter of reflection on human life, our own or others, is essential to that cheerfulness and buoyancy of feeling at which we should aim. We are virtually told to seek pleasure by not seeking it. "The longest way round is the shortest way home." Should we deliberately seek for pleasure we shall defeat our own end. The only sensible thing to do is not to seek it, but to *take* as much of it as we can get when it comes. But that is much the same as saying, the end of life is to have no end.

How can we attain this contented and cheerful frame of mind which has no regrets and no anticipations? Must it not be by suppressing our natural tendency to "look before and after," and refusing to go beyond the good of the moment? But such a resolute avoidance of the past and future is not to be attained without a struggle. For the very injunction, "Seize the moment,"

implies that man naturally reaches beyond the moment and projects himself into the past and the future. Now, how can it be shown that in the struggle the end will not be sacrificed? Should it happen that the tendency to reflection is unusually strong in a man, may he not destroy all, or almost all, the pleasure he might have had by trying to belie his natural inclination? And why should he try? May he not get more satisfaction in the pleasure of memory and the pleasure of hope than another contrives to extract from the pleasures of experience? What is true of the man of reflection is true of the most light-headed Autolycus that ever skipped along the highway of life. If you leave him to find pleasure in his own way, he may be moderately pleased, but you must not introduce disunion into his mind by telling him to *seek* to live in the moment. Thus we reach the dilemma; either (*a*) momentary pleasure is an end that cannot be reached, or (*b*) it is an end that comes without being sought. In the former case it is useless to seek for it because it cannot be found, in the latter case it is superfluous to seek for it because it comes without being sought; on either alternative there is no end at all, unless we call that an end which cannot possibly be realized or that can only be realized by making something else the end.

(2) The source of the contradiction to which attention has just been called is a misinterpretation of the facts. Every one, it is said, as a matter of fact, desires pleasure and wishes to avoid pain, and his actions are and must be determined by the desire to obtain pleasure and to avoid pain. I deny that. We all feel that there are things which we should choose even if no pleasure came from them. Sometimes, with faint and lagging spirit, but with the determination to do his best, a man goes to his duty as the martyr goes to the stake. He anticipates not pleasure but pain, and he gets what he anticipates.

(3) Not only is this true, but I further maintain that no action which can be called a man's own is done out of regard for pleasure and nothing but pleasure. I shall be reminded that there is such a person as the pleasure-seeker. No doubt, but even he is not seeking pleasure for itself, he is seeking to still the immortal craving to realize himself, to find the means of speaking peace to his own spirit. He cannot avoid framing an ideal of himself and seeking to make it an actual experience. And so he tries one means of satisfaction after another; he chases the bubble of pleasure only to find it elude him; he increases his efforts, but they only bring him disappointment and at last despair. Try as he please he

cannot get rid of the ideal of himself because it is part of his divine nature. Why is the pursuit of pleasure admittedly so unsatisfactory a quest? It is not because the pleasure which is anticipated is not obtained; the pleasure *is* obtained; but when it is found it "leaves a bad taste in the mouth," to use Thackeray's phrase; the "thirst that from the soul doth rise" is still unslaked, and still the vision of an ideal good floats before the imagination. An animal is not troubled by such visions, but is perfectly contented with what comes to it; man cannot rest in the finite, but eternally strives after the infinite. That reflection which comprehends the past, the present, and the future in one glance, and which, to Aristippus, seemed a mere superfluity and a mistake, is in reality a hint of all that is highest in man.

Suppose that any race of people could act on the Cyrenaic principle, that contentment with whatever chances to fall to one's lot is true wisdom, what would be the result? The result would be spiritual death, absolute stagnation, the complete arrest of all that makes for progress in morality, law, and religion. Nothing could be learned from the past, because we can learn from the past only by taking to heart the mistakes and failures we have made; the future would have no message for us, since we are forbidden to move

about in "worlds not realized"; our life would be a dull round of acts performed with monotonous regularity and with complete absence of intelligent foresight and aftersight. Wearied and worn with the stifled yearnings after a higher life, we should at length be compelled in sheer self-defence to strike off the fetters which we had ourselves forged and fashioned on our spirits; or despair would drive us to the deep, where, as we might hope, the restless strivings of a useless life might be stilled for ever.

CHAPTER III

EPICURUS

THE theory of Aristippus, that the highest good is to make the most of the fleeting moment, to live intensely in each pleasure as it comes, we have found to be self-contradictory, and untrue at once to the facts of human life and to the deeper nature of man. For, on the one hand, it tells us to *seek* for pleasure and yet to exclude all reflection, and, on the other hand, it affirms that men always do seek pleasure, and that there is no higher end in life, both propositions being demonstrably untenable. The main feature which separates the hedonism of Aristippus from later forms of the doctrine is its attempt to banish *thought* in all its forms as a foreign element, which has no right to obtrude itself into the consciousness of man. Such an effort to ignore what constitutes the very essence and nobility of human nature could at best succeed only for a time, and hence we find that in Epicurus,

on whose shoulders the mantle of Aristippus fell, the existence and necessity of reflection is frankly accepted as a fact that must be taken due note of and embodied in a true theory of human conduct.

The end is still held to be pleasure, but pleasure that needs to be sought with care and foresight. How best to make life most pleasant on the whole is therefore the main task of philosophy as Epicurus conceives of it. Epicurus does not ignore or seek to stifle reflection, but he tries to bring it under the yoke of a narrow and limited practical end. For the speculative thought which has no other aim than the discovery of truth he cares nothing; what he desires is to get a working theory which shall enable a man to get out of life all that is best in it. Ethics is the sole study that in his inmost soul he thinks worthy of serious attention, and by ethics he means a practical creed that will tell a man how best to live in peace and tranquillity. His problem is, What is that kind of conduct which will bring me as an individual the greatest satisfaction?

The great speculative thinkers of Greece—Socrates and Plato and Aristotle—never divorced the two questions: (1) What is the highest good of the individual? (2) What is the highest good of the state? for to them, to answer the former was

to answer the latter. To Epicurus, and equally to Zeno, the chief of the rival school of the Stoics, the problem of ethics was, How am I as an individual to find the highest satisfaction possible in a world that is foreign to me?

Why such a change in the point of view from which life was contemplated should have taken place it is easy to understand. The effect of the Macedonian conquests was to destroy the old civic constitutions of Greece and with them the freedom and public spirit of the people. At the end of the fourth century B.C., Athens was alternately a prey to the Macedonian successors of Alexander, and to tyrants like Demetrius. Material prosperity she still enjoyed, but all that makes a people great had vanished,—sovereignty, patriotism, and vigorous intellectual and religious life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Epicurus and Zeno, differing so widely in their respective theories of life—the one making pleasure the end, and the other virtue—should yet agree in placing wisdom in tranquillity of the individual soul. "Fallen on evil days," men had to retire into themselves, and seek in their own minds for the satisfaction which was denied to them in public life. Hence we are led to think of Epicurus, to borrow Plato's figure, as taking shelter under a wall from the rain-storm of civic commotion.

The whole philosophy of Epicurus is of the nature of a compromise. He cannot deny the importance of reflection as a factor in human conduct, and yet he will not allow it to follow its own law, and to go straight to its mark. Reducing all knowledge to the flux of individual feelings, and holding that we can never get beyond the walls of the "closely shut cell of our subjective personality," he boldly affirmed that the study of nature was useless, because the secret meaning of nature cannot be discovered by man. Epicurus, agreeing with Aristippus in the reduction of all direct knowledge of the external world to sensation, was yet haunted by the doubt that nature might rudely break into the citadel of the soul and disturb its serenity, and so he felt compelled to show that we know enough of nature to teach us that it cannot be hostile to our peace of mind.

The earlier thinkers consistently refused, having defined knowledge as the feeling of the moment, to go beyond the moment in search of the end of life; the later, with less logic but more truth, affirmed that just in the power of transcending the moment and grasping the idea of life as a whole, lies the possibility of making life worth living. Aristippus says, 'Throw away all theory and live in present feeling'; Epicurus says, 'Let theory be strictly subordinate to

practice.' We need not be surprised, then, to find that the doctrine of Epicurus is destitute of the simple vigour of his predecessor; but we may be sure also that it mingles truth and falsehood in ampler proportions.

Bearing carefully in mind that the aim of Epicurus is to construct a theory that will bring peace to the individual soul, and that in science for its own sake he has no interest, we may now go on to show how his philosophy differs from that of his predecessor.

(1) First of all Epicurus has a theory of the nature of things, the theory which has been made familiar to us from the noble poem of his Roman follower Lucretius. For the naïve view of Aristippus, that we cannot know anything about the nature of the external world, he substitutes the theory, borrowed from Democritus of old, that matter is composed of an infinite number of minute particles or atoms, the sole properties of which are size, shape, and weight, and which have existed from all eternity. This theory Epicurus was led to adopt, because it seemed to him to disprove the popular belief that the gods intermeddled in human affairs. The superstition of supernatural interference had to be got rid of, if man was to be freed from the dread of beings more powerful than himself; and the atomic theory, as he conceived it,

apparently opened up an admirable way of escape. Granted an eternity of time in which all the possible combinations of atoms may occur, and an infinite number of atoms "ruining along the illimitable inane" of space, and we can explain as it seemed to him, on purely mechanical principles, the apparent design implied in the exquisite symmetry of a flower, the flexibility and grace of an animal or a man, and even the survival of certain forms of social organisation. In infinite time an infinity of possible combinations of atoms must have occurred infinitely often, and naturally those aggregates, the particles of which have most affinity for one another, proved to be the most stable, and survived when others, like the changing forms of a kaleidoscope, died in the moment of their birth. Thus a vast number of bodies were originally thrown up from the earth's bosom, but, not having the means of nutrition or self-defence, they individually perished.

This doctrine bears a general resemblance to the Darwinian account of the origin of species, but it differs fundamentally in this, that it takes no account of the slow and gradual accumulation of slight increments of differences in successive individuals as the great lever of evolution.

Assuming, then, that all things have arisen from a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," can we tell the

manner in which the various combinations have taken place? Democritus had held that the atoms must from all eternity have been falling directly downwards through infinite space with various degrees of velocity, and that in colliding with one another, rotatory movements were set up, from which the bodies now scattered through space were formed. But as Aristotle had pointed out that in a vacuum all bodies must fall at the same rate, and, therefore, would never come in contact, Epicurus, with that simplicity of theoretical intellect which is characteristic of the narrowly "practical" man, modified the doctrine of Democritus so far as to say that the atoms were capable of a slight deflection from the line of perpendicular descent, and so were brought into collision with one another. Lucretius with admirable simplicity adds that we have an instance of such deflection from the straight path in our own actions when we swerve aside from an original impulse.

The sole original contribution of Epicurus to this theory, the supposition that the atoms have a power of spontaneous deflection, is not such as to call forth much respect for his scientific temper. In fact, so far from saying with M. Renan, that Epicureanism was "the great scientific school of antiquity," we must say that the founder of the school was as unscientific as he was unspeculative.

The basis of all science is the inviolability of natural law, and this very inviolability seemed to Epicurus to be even more objectionable than a supernatural interference with the course of nature, since the gods may be propitiated, while Fate or Necessity is deaf to the prayers of man. The atomic doctrine he therefore introduced merely to banish the gods from the sphere of human life. The gods are immortal and live a life of perfect blessedness, but, absolutely sufficient to themselves, they do not seek to interfere in the changing course of events in the world, nor have they any influence on the movements of the heavenly bodies. In fact, they are themselves composed of material atoms that have come together by chance.

The Epicurean idea of the divine nature is beautifully expressed by Tennyson in his *Lucretius*, where he speaks of

> "The gods, who haunt
> The lucid interspace of world and world,
> Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
> Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
> Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
> Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
> Their sacred everlasting calm."

Having banished the gods to the spaces between the infinity of worlds, Epicurus seemed at first to have left men to govern their own life. But in fleeing from one difficulty he stumbled upon an-

other. For is it not worse to be dragged in the dust behind the triumphal car of a merciless necessity than to be the sport of supernatural beings, who at least have something in their nature of human tenderness? Pressed by this difficulty we may be sure that Epicurus eagerly welcomed the flaw in the atomic doctrine of Democritus already referred to and was only too glad to modify it by the view of spontaneous self-movement in the atoms. For admitting such spontaneity, it seems credible that in man also there is a certain freedom of movement enabling him to do what is best for his own felicity.

Thus Epicurus sets up the mechanical doctrine of atomism to get rid of supernatural interference with human life, and he denies pure mechanism to make room for human freedom.

(2) A second difference between Epicurus and Aristippus is that the former has a theory of the ultimate nature of man as a being composed of *soul* and body. In saying that pleasure, pain, and indifference are respectively gentle, rough, and equable movements, Aristippus confuses feeling with its bodily conditions—*i.e.* he draws no distinction between soul and body. Epicurus clearly distinguishes them, although his theory of their nature is such as to allow of no essential difference. All existing things are composed of material atoms,

and the only difference between soul and body is in the relative fineness of the soul's particles, and the manner of their composition. For the soul is made up of the four elements of air, fire, wind, and another element to which no name is given; all of these being atoms of the finest texture.

Epicurus' interest in the constitution of the soul, as in other forms of existence, is mainly practical. One of the most disturbing influences in the life of man is the fear of death and of future punishment.

> "The dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
> No traveller returns"

puzzles the will. But if the soul can be shown to be perishable like the body, that dread need no longer haunt us, and we shall be able to make the most of the present life.

Now the mortality of the soul seemed to Epicurus to follow from its very nature; for its particles being held together solely by the body. must be separated and dispersed when "the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved." The only other fear that remains to be combated is the natural shrinking from death; but this Epicurus tries to reason away by saying, as has often been said since, that there can be nothing very dreadful

in death, since it cannot come to us so long as we feel, and when we cease to feel we can know nothing at all. "When we are, death is not; when death is, we are not."

Thus by the removal of the superstitious dread of supernatural interference, and of the awful shadow of an immortality of darkness and despair, Epicurus thinks that he has satisfactorily prepared the way for his cheerful view of the life that now is.

(3) Epicurus expressly advises his followers to abstain from participation in public life, and, with less decision, not to form family ties. Even when a man has learned not to seek to pass beyond the "flaming rampart of the world"; when he has severely circumscribed his desires within the clouded sphere of his earthly life, refusing to permit his mind to "wander through eternity"; the possible sources of discomfort have not yet been exhausted. The wise man must not only be free from the restless ambition for place and power of the professional politician, but he should take no active interest in affairs of state, but content himself with "cultivating his garden." Let others frame laws; enough for him is obedience to the laws that are framed.

The kind of life that to Epicurus seemed best is that which was led by the brotherhood which

he founded, perhaps in imitation of Pythagoras. In a garden situated in the outskirts of Athens, a small body of men and women bound together in friendship by similarity of tastes and their belief in a common doctrine, walked and talked, living a simple and natural life, discoursing on philosophy, and letting the great world go on its way. Perhaps we cannot better describe the life of Epicurus and his friends than by saying that it was the uneventful and leisured life of a small university in which rivalries and ambitions were dissolved in reverence for a loved teacher, and into which no disturbing spirit, burning with a sense of the wrongs and woes of humanity, was permitted to enter. A quiet, dreamy, cloistered life it was, ennobled by an air of antique grace and refinement.

The Epicurean conception of life is not one to commend itself to daring and original spirits. The contrast between the prim and formal habits of this community and the popular notions of Epicureanism as the wild Bacchanalian revelry of roystering blades, or the fastidious selfishness of the epicure, had already struck Seneca in his day. "When the stranger," says Seneca, "comes to the gardens on which the words are inscribed,—'Friend, here it will be well for thee to abide; here pleasure is the highest good,'—he will find the keeper of that garden a kindly, hospitable man, who will

set before him a dish of barley porridge and water in plenty, and say, 'Hast thou not been well entertained? These gardens do not whet hunger, but quench it; they do not cause a greater thirst by the very drinks they afford, but soothe it by a remedy which is natural and costs nothing.'" "Give me a barley cake and water," said Epicurus, "and I am ready to vie even with Zeus in happiness." Whatever may be the demerits of Epicureanism as conceived by its founder, it certainly did not err by ministering to the pleasures of sense.

Nevertheless, (4), it is the basis of the Epicurean doctrine that, not only is all pleasure good, but that all pleasures are ultimately pleasures of sense. To Aristippus any distinction of bodily and mental pleasures would have been irrelevant, for the end he conceived to lie in filling up the measure of the present with vivid feelings, and as feelings all pleasures are alike. Epicurus, however, in distinguishing between "flesh" and "spirit," mind and body, is compelled to admit either that there are two conflicting ends—(*a*) bodily pleasure and (*b*) mental pleasure—or to reduce one to the other; and, as his psychology did not admit of any radical distinction between body and soul, he naturally affirmed that all pleasures are at bottom pleasures of the senses.

In truth there can be no real distinction for

Epicurus between, say, a pleasure of the palate, the pleasure felt in listening to fine music, and the pleasure of intellectual activity; the only difference he can allow is, that sensuous and aesthetic pleasures are immediately excited by the impact of the external thing, while mental pleasure is due to the excitation of fainter images of sensuous pleasures. Hence it seemed to Epicurus, if we may accept the testimony of Cicero, that the pleasures of the mind are more refined than those of the body, because, as capable of being felt in the absence of the external stimulus, and as freed from the pain that may have accompanied their original presentation, they afford a prolonged and a painless gratification.

Accordingly, (5), when Epicurus goes on to define wherein true pleasure consists—the pleasure which is the end of life—he tells us that it consists in serenity of mind, and that it can only be obtained by the wise man who is ready to reject immediate gratification in favour of a permanent and tranquil satisfaction. The wise man, accustomed to look at life as a whole, does not, as Aristippus held, eagerly snatch at whatever pleasure presents itself, but so orders his life that he is disturbed neither by intense pleasure nor by intense pain. His aim is to be independent of all vicissitudes of fortune, and to be continually in a state of

calmness and serenity. Hence his main pleasures will be those of memory and imagination, and those pleasures of sense that do not excite beyond measure. Many pleasures he will resolve to forego, because they are incompatible with the highest good, the attainment of a painless and equable serenity, and he will even cheerfully welcome a less pain for a greater future pleasure.

So far does Epicurus carry this principle as to maintain that the wise man even on the rack may say, "How sweet!" For having banished all dread of destiny, and all superstitious fears of a future world; aware, moreover, that nothing can come to him that need disturb his self-centred calm, he can afford to despise bodily pain, which he knows to be but momentary and evanescent. Thus, by a circuitous route, Epicurus reaches the same conclusion as the Stoics, that true felicity is to be found in that peace of mind which is independent of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

(6) Epicurus tries to show that his theory of pleasure as the highest good is consistent with the virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and friendship.

(*a*) Temperance, or self-restraint in all its forms, is in a sense a name for the whole of virtue. The end is pleasure, but that end can be attained only by excluding all the sources of disquiet and

dissatisfaction. Epicurus therefore preaches the virtue of contentment with the worldly goods which fortune may bring us, and praises the simple and frugal life of the man of small means. The rich he enjoins to remember that with the loss of fortune all is not lost; the necessary wants of man are few, and no one need lose his peace of mind who can get a piece of bread and a glass of water.

(*b*) Courage, in its old heroic sense of the glad willingness to face pain and death for one's home and fatherland, is not a virtue that could be incorporated in the Epicurean system without modification. A doctrine which found the highest wisdom in indifference to public life, and in freedom from the ties of family, could not attach much importance to enthusiastic devotion to one's home and country. Accordingly, courage is limited to the cheerful endurance of immediate pain by the remembrance or anticipation of ideal pleasure.

(*c*) Justice is simply a form of enlightened self-interest. Epicurus expressly denies that Injustice is in itself evil; it is inconsistent with the perfect life only because the fear of possible punishment by society destroys a man's serenity. In the orthodox creed drawn up by Epicurus himself, and which his followers were asked to learn by rote, we find these articles: (1) "Justice is by nature

a contract for the prevention of aggression; (2) Justice does not exist among animals which are unable, nor among tribes of men who are unwilling, to enter into such a contract; (3) Apart from contract, Justice has no existence; (4) Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only through the dread of punishment which it produces; (5) No man who stealthily evades the contract to abstain from natural aggressions can be sure of escaping detection."

(*d*) Friendship, as it will readily be understood, occupies a large place in the Epicurean picture of the perfect life. This virtue in the mind of Epicurus is the sole form of the sympathetic emotions which it is wise to cultivate. Primarily, indeed, it is described, from the purely individualistic point of view, as valuable because it is needed to complete a man's happiness. But, as usual, Epicurus sacrifices consistency to his real goodness of heart. The friendship which gives a charm to life does not think of itself, but only of its object. As Professor Bain puts it: "The giver should not expect compensation, and should nevertheless obtain it." As a matter of fact the members of the Epicurean brotherhood were remarkable for the tenderness and fidelity of their friendships, a fact which is no doubt partly due to the natural equanimity of temper of its members, but partly also to the

influence of the philosophical doctrine which they made the guide of their lives.

On this doctrine of Epicurus one or two general remarks may be made:

(1) In its theoretical aspect it is manifestly a veiled scepticism. To construct a hypothesis in regard to the nature of things, not for the purpose of explaining nature but to get rid of the dread of supernatural beings, can only lead to scepticism. If it is true, as Epicurus affirms, that there are different and even contradictory ways of explaining natural phenomena, what is that but to say that any science of nature is impossible? No doubt it is possible to apprehend what is true without seeing that there is a higher truth which transcends and includes it. There is, for example, nothing contradictory of the law of gravitation in the common-sense observation that bodies which are unsupported fall to the ground, and yet the one truth was known long before the other. But to say that the law of gravitation sometimes operates and sometimes does not is to deny law altogether. Such contradictions Epicurus not only was prepared to accept, but he rejoiced in them.

We have seen that after banishing the gods and reducing all the phenomena of nature to the unconscious movements of material atoms, he contradicts himself with an equanimity worthy of his

own imperturbable gods, by saying that after all the movements of atoms are not purely mechanical but involve a degree of spontaneity. Now, if Epicurus may thus modify his mechanical theory of nature as he thinks fit, manifestly we may with the same right deny it altogether. A theory which holds good only at the will of its author is a mere guess, and has no scientific value whatever. But with the denial of the atomic theory the concealed scepticism of the whole Epicurean philosophy becomes clearly visible. For if that is an untenable hypothesis, what becomes of the dread of divine interference, to destroy which it was invented? Must not that dread return in its full force, and overturn the scientific bulwark that has been thrown up to exclude it? Thus the denial of any real knowledge of nature leads on Epicurus' own showing to the overthrow of his theory of life.

(2) It may be said, however, that at least there is truth in the ethical doctrine of Epicurus, whatever may be said of the weakness of his philosophy of nature. That a theory which has commended itself to some of the acutest minds of all ages contains a measure of truth I should be the last to deny. But the question for us to decide is whether the principle which it proclaims, or the principle which it tacitly assumes, is the true one. What it openly affirms is that the only reasonable

end for a wise man to aim at is the securing for himself of the greatest amount of pleasure on the whole.

Now, in speaking of the greatest pleasure on the whole, there is introduced a conception that, when carried out, destroys the whole hedonistic basis of the theory, and converts it into its opposite. Had Epicurus really understood himself when he said that pleasure is the only thing desirable, he would not have allowed himself to add that he meant not *all* pleasure, but only *some* pleasure. If pleasure, and nothing but pleasure, is the end of life, by what right does Epicurus go on to add: 'I do not mean you to take each pleasure as it comes, but to reflect and see that you get pleasure that will bring you permanent satisfaction'? For, not to repeat what was said in the last chapter as to the impossibility of getting permanent satisfaction from that which is essentially transient in its nature, I maintain that to say (*a*) 'Pleasure is the end,' is not to say (*b*) 'Permanent satisfaction is the end,' but that the one end is diametrically opposite to the other. If to be pleased is to secure the end of living, Aristippus was right in assuming that we must be content with whatever pleasure chances to come in our way, inconsistent as he was in saying that our aim must be to secure such pleasure.

Epicurus, when pressed with the difficulty that it

is impossible to get permanent satisfaction from a flux of individual feelings, which are

> "Like the snow-fall in the river,
> A moment white, then melts for ever,"

tries to turn the edge of the objection by saying, 'Oh, I don't mean immediate pleasure, but that state of pleased enjoyment which may be made habitual by the man who aims at true pleasure, *i.e.* at that state of contentment which comes to the man who is free from an unreasoning dread of imaginary evils, and who confines his desires within reasonable limits.'

Now, we have here two totally different ends: on the one hand pleasure, and, on the other hand, contentment. If Epicurus had really meant what he said when he declared pleasure, and pleasure only, to be the end, he would have seen that it is an end which can only be secured if at every moment of existence there is not only pleasure, but pleasure than which no greater is conceivable. For if a single moment of a man's life is empty of pleasure, or if the pleasure felt falls below what he can imagine, then he must sorrowfully confess that, if pleasure is the end it is useless to seek it, because it cannot be found. But if peace or tranquillity of soul is the end, then, whatever may be said of it, at least it cannot be attained coincidently

with the attainment of the greatest possible sum of pleasure.

This is plainly admitted by Epicurus, when he says that the wise man will avoid all intense pleasures and strive to attain to a cheerful impassibility. For if he had seriously meant that pleasure is the end, he would have seen that the end cannot be attained unless the intensest pleasure conceivable is secured at every moment of existence. Accordingly, Epicurus virtually abandons the view that pleasure is the end, and quietly substitutes for it peace, serenity, tranquillity of soul. Hence the curious feature in his system that, beginning with the assertion that all pleasures are of sense, he goes on to say that the only pleasures worth having are those of memory and imagination; starting from the affirmation that the pleasure at which we should aim is positive pleasure, he is led on to admit that the only satisfactory pleasure is that which arises from the removal of pain; and professing to make agreeable feeling the object of pursuit, he ends with the doctrine that the highest state of man is that of pure painlessness, a state which, strange to say, may coexist with the intensest bodily torture.

Here we see Hedonism working out its own euthanasia. The end turns out to be, not an unbroken succession of the intensest feelings of

pleasure imaginable, but an imperturbable calm which is indifferent whether the next moment may bring pain or pleasure.

(3) Let us, however, waive the difficulty, that on Epicurus' own showing, the end is not pleasure but something which, whatever it is, is the negation of pleasure; let us grant that the peace or serenity of soul which it is reasonable to aim at is a kind of pleasure, and the question still remains: Is the attainment of peace or serenity a worthy end of life? I do not think that it is, for these among other reasons:

(*a*) In the first place, the tranquil life which Epicurus sets up as the ideal, is one to which the majority of men cannot possibly attain. It may be delightful for brethren to dwell together in unity, but when the unity has to be purchased by giving up all the serious business of life, and constituting oneself the member of a mutual admiration society, it is manifest that many men cannot, and some men will not, subscribe to the doctrine. Now, a theory of conduct that does not apply to all men, but only to a few of exceptional advantages, or exceptional temper, is self-condemned. It may be a statement of the manner in which the select spirits of the earth choose to spend their lives, but it is certainly not a true theory of *man* as such. No ethical doctrine can be true that does

not so define the end that it comprehends all the actions of all men at all times. Epicureanism, as the creed of the impractical dreamer, can have no authority as a scheme of life for the world at large.

But (*b*), even if it could be realized by all men, serenity of mind is not a worthy end of life. To make one's *own* equanimity the aim of all one's endeavours is simply to reduce selfishness to a system. Now, it may be shown that a purely selfish morality is a contradiction in terms. If in every act I am to regard my own satisfaction as the end, all things and all persons must be regarded by me simply as *means* for the attainment of that end. There can therefore be no talk of what I *ought* to do, but only of what it is my *interest* to do.

What then is my *interest*? It must be that which will, as I believe, bring me satisfaction. But men's ideas of what will bring them satisfaction are by no means identical, nor are they always the same in the same individual at different times. Yet there is no other criterion except the conviction of the individual at the time. You may tell a man of abounding energy that in your opinion contentment can be found only in quiet contemplation, and his answer is, that to him contentment cannot be found in that way. Tell the man who

has come under its witchery that gambling can give no genuine satisfaction, and he will answer you with a sneer: for him there *is* satisfaction in it, or he would not pursue it so eagerly. And so in other cases; once lay down the principle that the end is individual satisfaction, and you have as many ends as there are individuals, or rather there is a different end for every change in the varying desires of individuals. You have evoked a demon whom you cannot exorcise.

Pure individualism in the moral world is the analogue of pure anarchy in the state. To every precept that claims his obedience, the individual is entitled to answer: 'I don't see that obedience will bring me satisfaction, and I don't mean to obey.' Society may answer: 'If you don't obey me you will destroy your own peace of mind, for I will punish you for your disobedience.' To which the man may rejoin: 'Very well, I will obey, but I don't admit your right to coerce me.' And on the theory of individualism, the man has all the logic on his side. For, if there is no standard of action except what will bring satisfaction to the individual, the laws of society can be nothing more than the means by which the majority in the community seek to secure their own idea of satisfaction.

Might is right, and moral obligation is an organized tyranny by which the strongest gain

their own better satisfaction at the expense of the weaker. It is, therefore, allowable, and even praiseworthy, for any man who can, to evade the power which seeks to destroy the satisfaction which it is admitted he has a right to seek in his own way. Theft or murder is not wrong in itself, but only because it is unpleasant when it is found out and punished. But if the chances are that it may not be found out, and one has the criminal's idea of satisfaction, there is nothing in individualism to forbid it. To this Epicurus can but answer that contentment is obtainable only by passive obedience to the constituted authorities. For a man of Epicurus' type of character that is no doubt true, but to men of a lawless turn of mind it is not true, and to these nothing can be said except to urge the danger of being found out, a danger which may weigh very lightly with them.

Thus the selfish view of life which underlies the Epicurean doctrine leads in the realm of conduct to the destruction of moral law, just as the denial of purpose in nature has as its consequence the sovereignty of chance.

CHAPTER IV

HOBBES

BETWEEN the age of Epicurus and the age of Hobbes there extends a period of over 1900 years, and yet the theory of the latter seems at first sight to be merely the explicit statement of what in the former is implicit. In making the satisfaction of the individual the criterion and standard of good conduct, Epicurus not only deserted his principle that agreeable feeling of any and every sort is the end of life, but he virtually reduced all conduct to selfishness. Hobbes, who in all things is a man of "vigour and rigour," conceals his theory in no honeyed phrases, but says outright that by nature man is absolutely selfish, and that from selfishness all his acts proceed. But the moment he has said this, he goes on to add that society is based upon the voluntary surrender of the individual will for the common good. The motive by which men were led to give up their

freedom to the state was selfish, but this end can be attained only by the complete negation of selfishness. Like all pleasure, selfish pleasure can be attained only by not being directly sought.

We can see, then, in Hobbes the conflict of two opposite and irreconcilable principles—(*a*) the principle of pure individualism, and (*b*) the principle of pure universalism. That this contrast of Hobbes and Epicurus is only what we might expect, we may readily see when we think of the changed spirit which the introduction and spread of Christianity introduced into the world. With perfect self-complacency, Epicurus lays down the principle that a man should not trouble himself with what concerns the general good, but should seek to exclude all that might ruffle his equanimity. Hobbes, while he asserts with a brutal frankness that the original springs of human action come from selfishness, yet affirms with even greater vehemence that direct selfishness defeats its own end.

This tacit recognition of the common weal as the condition of individual satisfaction is a mark of all modern theories of conduct. For the modern moralist, even when he is unconscious of it himself, is under dominion of the theory first clearly enunciated in that picture of the higher life which we have in the Christian New Testament. There we are told, on the one hand, that the life of each

man is of infinite importance to himself, and, on the other hand, that he must have no will of his own. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it." In the Christian idea these opposite points of view are reconciled in the command: "Be ye *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

But while Christianity, in the principle of universal brotherhood and sonship, introduced what seems to me the ideal of human life, the attempt to realize that ideal has been a work of great difficulty, nor can it be said that we have yet been able to apply it practically in its purity, or to frame a complete system of ethics in conformity with it. It is the nature of all ideals to defy perfect realization, not only in the life of the individual but of the race, and not merely in practice but also in theory. The "Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" is the Christian ideal of conduct; but when we ask, What then will be the final form of society? we find that, not having the gift of prophecy, we cannot tell, or at best we can only frame a vague and shadowy outline. We may feel sure that in the "golden age" yet to be, "liberty, equality, and fraternity" will assume a higher form than we can at present clearly conceive, but what that higher form of things will be

we are unable to say. At the same time we cannot divest ourselves of the ideal, nor can we frame a theory of man that does not in some way pay homage to it.

So it was with Hobbes. Despite his ostensible reduction of all actions to prudent selfishness, he was really bringing into prominence the necessity of society to the realization of the individual, and the actual result of his theory was to destroy the doctrine of the "right divine of kings to govern wrong," the right to oppose their own caprice or selfishness to the eternal laws of reason. Hobbes' theory of society was the natural product of the age. Born in 1588, the year of the victory over the Spanish Armada, his life of ninety-one years extends over the reigns of James I. and his son, the period of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, and into the time of the Restoration. This period of "storm and stress," when the doctrine of the despotic authority of the sovereign was vehemently affirmed and strenuously denied, almost compelled a thinker to take one side or the other. It has been sometimes said that Hobbes was led to frame his theory from observing the anarchy which prevailed during the Civil War; but this view is hardly correct, since the earliest draft of his political theory was made several years before the outbreak of the war. What we can say with

certainty is, that it was suggested by the seething discontent which pervaded the whole country, a discontent which found articulate expression in the struggles between Charles I. for despotic power and the determination of Parliament to secure and preserve the freedom of the people.

The originality of Hobbes lay in his conception of the "natural" state of man, and the manner in which he sought to reconcile the claim to absolute sovereignty with the doctrine that all power proceeds from the will of the people. His aim was, as he tells us in the dedication of the *Leviathan*, to "pass between the points" of those who contend on the one side for too great liberty, and on the other side for too much authority. The theory of Hobbes is shortly as follows: In a state of nature, or as he exists before he has constructed "that great Leviathan called a commonwealth or state," man is absolutely selfish. The primary appetites are the love of gain and the love of glory, which give rise to a war of every man against every man. By nature all men are equal in faculty, for although some men are stronger in body and others of quicker mind, yet "the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederence with others that are in the same danger as himself," while experience puts all men on an equality as regards the practical affairs

of life. From this equality of ability proceeded war, for, as all men desire wealth and power and all have an equal capacity to attain their end, natural distrust of others suggests the wisdom of making oneself master of their persons. The natural love of power causes this end to be pursued further than security requires; and the love of glory prompts men to extort from others a recognition of their own superiority.

Natural distrust, then, together with competition and glory, are the main springs of action in the natural man. These desires are not to be regarded as immoral, nor are the actions which proceed from them wrong. Where there is no law there is no injustice. Justice and injustice are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. In a state of nature there is no distinction of *mine* and *thine*; every man has unlimited right to all that he covets, and as he covets all, that means an unlimited right to all.

The source of right and wrong, justice and injustice, must be sought in the laws of the state, and such laws cannot be imposed until the state itself is constituted. The state must be regarded as a great artificial man or monster constructed by men for the express purpose of putting an end to internecine war, and enabling the individual to secure the end which the natural state sets before

him, but prevents him from attaining. A right to all things is a right to nothing. The state is therefore based upon contract. All the social virtues are different ways of securing peace.

The principle of the contract is a mutual agreement to abstain from aggression and to put down disturbance. Reason, therefore, teaches men to give up their individual will to the sovereign power. Thus they confer all power on one man or assembly of men, so that all their wills are reduced to one will. From the very nature of the contract, this surrender of will is made once for all. To seek for a revision of the contract is simply to restore the state of nature, and so to destroy the whole foundation of public security. The sovereign power, whether vested in a king or an assembly, is unlimited. In a monarchy, the king is absolute: he cannot be justly accused by his subjects, much less put to death, and he alone is judge of what is necessary in peace and war. And not only is he the head of the state but also of the church. Religion exists as a means of securing peace, and therefore it is one of the functions of government to determine what sort of religion shall be adopted by the people.

Whether the government shall be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy, must depend on the terms of the contract; but Hobbes inclines to

an absolute monarchy, on the ground that it is the interest of a single ruler to seek the good of his people, that he is perfectly free to select the best counsellors that can be found, and that he is not so liable to inconstancy as a large and heterogeneous body.

No one would now accept the account of Hobbes as to the origin of the state and the basis of morality, but the individualism from which it sets out is held in some form or other by all modern hedonists. The notion of "natural rights" is expressly defended by Mr. Herbert Spencer in one of his later works, *Man versus the State*, and it may be profitable to examine it with some minuteness.

(1) The first thing that strikes the student of our own day is that Hobbes had no apprehension of the historical method as applied to the origin of society. He speaks of the "state of nature" as if it had an actual basis in fact, and of a contract entered into by men existing in that "state of nature."

But (*a*) the more we inquire into the early condition of man the more certain we become that there never was a time when society was not, and when individuals stood to one another in an attitude of pure antagonism. The notion of the existence of a number of men, not united

by any social bonds, but each bent on seeking his own individual good and the destruction of his neighbour, is a pure fiction of the abstract intellect. Hobbes, in partial anticipation of this objection, says that, while the state of internecine war never existed at any time "over all the world," yet "the savage people in many places of America have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner."

The answer to this is, that, while savage races no doubt have no government or laws in their more developed form, they have chiefs whose authority is recognized and customs which they respect. The "savage people" of America are not individual units exhibiting nothing but repulsion towards one another, and therefore we cannot find among them that state of nature about which Hobbes and others have told us fairy tales. In the earliest form of society it is possible that even the family was not yet recognized as a unity, but in no conceivable form of human existence could there have been a mere aggregate of individuals united by no social bonds whatever. As Plato says that there must be honour even among a band of thieves, so we may say that in the natural state of man, meaning by that his earliest or primitive state, the tacit recognition of the claims of others was the condition of mere exist-

ence. Even if no other expression of social feeling were admitted but that of a regard for helpless children, the abstraction of the mere individual would be overthrown. But in any community, however barbarous, some authority must be implicitly recognized, or it would become a prey to external nature, to the lower animals, and to hostile groups of men.

How utterly unhistorical Hobbes' conception of the state of nature is may be seen at once if we consider that in the patriarchal form of society, the earliest which we can with certainty affirm to have existed, the unit is the family, and all property belongs not to the individual but to the family. And if we accept the view of M'Lennan, that there is an earlier form of society in which there is as yet no distinction of one family from another, we must still say that property first belongs to the community, next to the family, and last of all to the individual. So far from it being true that the primitive state of man was a mere group of individuals, we must rather say that originally there was no distinction of individual and society, and that only gradually, as men came to a consciousness of themselves, was a contrast drawn between the man and the state. The reflective grasp of the principle of personality, as the basis of individual rights of property and

person, does not go further back than the age of the Stoics, who universalized Roman law and made it the type of all law.

(*b*) As there never was a period when men existed out of society, it is plain that there never was a time when they instituted society by entering into a contract such as Hobbes describes. Not only is there no historical evidence of the formation of society by contract, but from the nature of the case the thing is impossible. The intelligence, foresight, and self-control demanded by the theory could only be developed in that very society which the contract is supposed first to establish. In such an instance as that of the Pilgrim Fathers, the formation of a community by mutual agreement is no doubt conceivable, but the Pilgrim Fathers had already been trained in a highly-developed form of society. Hobbes' theory of a social contract has therefore no historical foundation.

(2) Nor, secondly, has it any real philosophical basis. The whole conception of the state as a mere aggregate of individuals is fundamentally unsound. Hobbes, in accordance with his mechanical idea of nature as composed of minute material particles, although not of indivisible atoms, and of all real processes as the movements of these particles, thinks of the state as an automaton formed artificially by man in imitation of nature. Society,

that is, is constructed as a watchmaker constructs a watch. In a quaint frontispiece this "artificial animal" is represented as overlooking a fair landscape of town and country in the form of a crowned giant, made up of tiny figures of men, and bearing in either hand a sword and a crosier; and in the introduction he makes an elaborate comparison of the several parts of this "artificial man" to the organs of the "artificial animal"—the sovereignty representing the soul, which gives life and motion to the whole body; officers of state, the joints; reward and punishment, the nerves; and wealth, the strength.

(*a*) The assimilation of the body politic to an organism is in Hobbes, as in all individualists, of little significance, since organic processes are identified with purely mechanical movements. Had Hobbes really grasped what is implied in calling the state an animal, he would have seen that to qualify the description by calling it an "artificial animal" is to put a lower for a higher conception. An "artificial" animal is simply a machine, and the peculiarity of a machine is that its parts do not bear any necessary relation to one another. The spring and wheels and hands of a watch are all connected in the watch, but the connection is of a purely external or artificial character. The parts of one watch may be interchanged with the corresponding parts

of another of the same make without loss to either; but you cannot transfer an eye or a heart or a brain from one living being to another without destroying it.

In an organism the parts are not independent units having a nature of their own apart from their place in the organism, but they derive their life and character from their relation to one another and to the whole. Hence it is that the condition of one organ more or less affects all the other organs. Now, the state, although its nature is not fully defined by calling it an "organism," is more of an organism than of a machine. For if, as Hobbes says, the government is the soul, the magistrate the joints, and reward and punishment the nerves, none of these organs can discharge their functions apart from the other organs that go to make up the state, and any imperfection in one organ must injuriously affect all the rest.

But more than this, the very nature of the members of the political organism is dependent upon their relation to one another. The statesman cannot learn to rule, the judge to apply the law, the teacher to educate, or the workman to exercise his handicraft, unless through the express or unconscious training of society. The individual, cut off from the all-pervasive influence of society, has no nature, because he is nothing. No doubt, the

capacities of the individual are not exhausted in any of the functions which he discharges as a member of the social organism, but his actual nature is none the less developed, and made what it is by the functions he fulfils in society. That being so, the very idea of a "state of nature," in which man is supposed to be what he is apart from social influences, is a pure fiction of abstraction. We can no more speak of what a man would be apart from society than we can speak of an organ as independent of the whole body. In the one case, as in the other, the nature of the parts is determined by the nature of the whole, as the nature of the whole is determined by the nature of the parts.

(*b*) As Hobbes has misconceived the nature of the parts, he naturally misconceives the nature of the whole. The state is the product of an artificial arrangement, being at first made, set together, and united "by pacts and covenants." Like a machine, its construction depends on the arbitrary will of its maker. For his own interest man has chosen to put it together, but had he thought otherwise he might have chosen differently. The notion of the state as an organism might have prevented Hobbes from taking this external view had the organic unity of society not been an idea entirely foreign to his age. The mere juxtaposition of

parts will form a heap or aggregate, but it will not make an organism. An organism is not made, but grows, and it grows only out of that which is already organized. No man can make an animal by an artificial combination of parts, nor is it possible to make a state by artifice. The state derives its character from the sum of conditions of the age, and it cannot change its character, much less come into existence, by the fiat of any man or body of men. The notion that the state derives its authority from the arbitrary will of the individuals composing it is as unphilosophical as it is unhistorical.

(3) The imperfection of Hobbes' doctrine is even more apparent when we see that the state is not only organic, but is a unity in which each of the parts of which it is composed is self-conscious. If we think of an organism not only as made up of organs, each of which is dependent upon the others, but each of which is conscious of its own activity and of the activity of the other organs, we shall get some idea of the nature of the state. It is this fact of self-consciousness that makes human society possible. No doubt there are gregarious animals, but they have not the power of comprehending what is implied in their social instincts, and so they do not invent new forms of association as man does. The power of reflecting

on the existing forms of society, of holding it at arm's length and contemplating it as a foreign object, is the condition of progress. Hence it is that the history of man has been in large measure the history of the changes in the form of social organization.

And just in proportion as each member of the state is not only conscious of his own special sphere of operations, but is able to grasp in his thought the whole complex functions of the society in which he lives, and to distinguish from it alien forms of society, and even to form ideals of society as it may yet be, in that proportion is the state living and progressive. It is for this reason mainly that all the members of a free state ought to have an education that shall fit them not only for their more limited functions, but for the comprehension of the meaning of the state in its relation to the destiny of man. From this point of view we can see how imperfect is the Hobbist notion of the state, as a despotic power set over them by the individuals composing it. From pure individualism we pass at a bound to pure universalism. For if the state of nature is one of absolute anarchy, there is no remedy but a remedy of force. If, on the other hand, we look at the actual fact, we see that the same faculty of self-conscious reason which enables a

man to be selfish also enables him to be unselfish.

Hence (4) Hobbes' conception of the natural state of man as one of unmitigated selfishness is as false as his idea that the state is merely an iron band connecting together a number of individual parts that otherwise would for ever repel each other. The state of nature is one that never existed or could exist. The nearest approach to it must be sought in the lowest form of society of which we have any knowledge. But in the lowest form of society that we can conceive the unselfish must be as developed as the selfish tendencies; otherwise the society could not hold together for an hour. These two tendencies are strictly correlative. Where the capacity for the one is strong, so also is the capacity for the other. "Great criminals," as Plato says, "are perverted heroes." Gigantic selfishness is possible only to men of vast ability.

By "nature," then, as we must say, man is both selfish and unselfish, *i.e.* "nature" is merely a term for those unrealized capacities which in their fruition become good or evil according as they are directed. These considerations apply to the forms assumed by the state in its transition from the lowest to the highest. In no age is there pure selfishness, in none is there pure unselfishness.

Selfishness and unselfishness are terms expressing harmony or discordance with the ideal. Speaking generally, the ideal, so far as it has been developed by a people, is embodied in the various forms of organization which together form the state as a whole. Thus, the morality of a civilized people expresses itself partly in the unwritten laws of the popular conscience, and partly in the written laws of the state.

But neither of these bodies of law is stationary, because it is the nature of human reason perpetually to revise and elevate its ideal of life. The new ideal first exists in the mind of some choice spirits more than usually responsive to reason, and gradually permeates the whole people, and is embodied in their laws and customs. At each stage of this continuous process of evolution it is possible for the individual members of the community to come up to the ideal standard of their age, or, in the case of men of progressive conscience, to the ideal standard in advance of their age; but it is also possible for them to fall below the standard. In the one case we say that a man leads a selfish life, in the other that he leads an unselfish life.

But observe that he could not be selfish were he not capable of unselfishness. A man cannot fall below his ideal if he has no ideal. We do

not call a dog selfish, because we do not believe that a dog frames ideals. Hobbes, therefore, in speaking of the primitive state of man as one of pure selfishness, was really forming an abstract man that could not possibly exist; for a being of unrelieved selfishness would have no consciousness of unselfishness, just because he would have no consciousness of an ideal self.

(5) We reach the same conclusion by examining Hobbes' analysis of the individual soul. The natural man is dominated by the love of gain and the love of glory, which are virtually identified with pure appetite. They are desires which are "born with a man," and as their aim is the good of the individual at the expense of others they are selfish in their nature. That the natural desires are selfish in their nature is a view which inevitably arises from the notion of men as pure individuals. For if men exist out of relation to society, and if in this independence of others they possess promptings to action, these promptings must be regarded as tending to promote the continuance of the isolated individual.

But this whole way of thinking is vicious. Man is not a mere individual, and he has therefore no purely individualistic tendencies. The desire of self-preservation is not selfish, because life is the primary condition of action, and therefore of moral

action. The love of wealth is not in itself a selfish propensity, for wealth is the symbol of the products of that industrial activity without which our modern life would be stripped of what makes it the minister of the higher activities. There is nothing selfish in the love of esteem, which is simply the reasonable desire to have the approbation of one's own reason reflected in the good opinion of others. Hobbes, in calling these desires selfish, has confused their perversion with their exercise. The love of life only becomes selfish when it leads a man to neglect his duty, or to barter his higher conscience for the sake of existence. The love of wealth may be selfish when it is made an end in itself, or when it leads a man to forget that wealth is a trust held for the good of others as well as for himself. The love of esteem may be selfish when it takes the form of an unhallowed ambition that sacrifices the public good in order to climb into place or power. But in all these cases the natural desires are perverted from their end. The man tramples on his ideal, and becomes immoral. But to be moral is not to eradicate the natural inclinations, but to idealize and spiritualize them. Then the love of life takes the shape of due care for health, the condition of all the higher activities; the love of wealth is merged in the desire to advance the well-being of

all; and the love of honour becomes the noble activity of the statesman, the scholar, and the reformer.

(6) We are now in a position to see how false it is to say that society is simply a roundabout way of securing one's own selfish pleasure. No doubt, men may seek to turn the various forms of social organization to their own advantage, but they do so at the peril of their spiritual nature. Society, as the more or less perfect embodiment of the ideal nature, is an expression of what is rational, and therefore of what commands the assent of reason. In obeying law we are giving assent to no tyrannical power, but to our own higher nature.

It is for this reason that one is compelled to doubt the honesty of the man who is indifferent to the every-day morality of the family or the civic community. We refuse to put confidence in the man who is a bad husband or father, or who is not scrupulous of commercial morality, rightly feeling that he who offends in these things offends in all. Nor can we have much faith in the profession of religion of the man who is indifferent to the tender charities of husband, son, and brother. The spirit of genuine morality is one, however diverse may be its applications, and that spirit is not inaptly expressed in the command to love one's neighbour as oneself. The doom of the man who makes his

own selfish gratification his end is in himself. No man can get rid of the ideal self, because it is his very nature as a rational being to construct such an ideal, and having constructed it, to be conscious of failure, even in outward success, when he falls short of it.

The state, then, is not an organized selfishness, as Hobbes assumes, but the means of freeing men from selfishness. The end is not one's own pleasure, but ideal goodness, an ideal which secures the individual good in and through the good of the whole. True self-satisfaction is not to be found in aiming, however indirectly, at one's own pleasure, but in aiming at the realization of the higher self partially manifest in society, and in seeking to make society conform completely to our ideal of what it should be. In satisfaction of this type, the individual and the universal coincide; in seeking the common good a man secures his own good; but the good which he attains cannot without perversity be called pleasure, nor can his motive be called selfish. The true satisfaction of the spirit is the blessedness of him who seeks first the realization of an objective good, knowing that all other things will be added to him.

CHAPTER V

LOCKE

In his passion for clearness and consistency Hobbes "cuts things in two with an axe." Admitting no qualifications he carries out his theory to its consequences. Men seek their own pleasure, and therefore all their actions, however disinterested they may seem, are selfish; society rests upon contract and the terms of the contract must be fulfilled to the letter; religion exists for the common good, and no religion can be allowed except that which is imposed by the state.

Locke is in all things the reverse of his predecessor. He is the most perfect embodiment of that spirit of compromise and that practical sagacity, which are main features in the English character. The idea which rules all his thoughts is that human knowledge is narrowly limited in its range, and yet that the "candle of reason" throws enough light on a man's path to keep him from stumbling.

"If we will disbelieve everything because we cannot certainly know all things, we shall do much as wisely as he who would not use his legs, but sit still and perish because he had no wings to fly."

Hence Locke begins his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* by saying that he proposes to inquire into the limits and origin of knowledge. "Were the capacities of our understanding well considered," he says, "the extent of our knowledge once discovered, and the horizon found which sets the bound between the enlightened and the dark parts of things, between what is and what is not comprehensible by us, men would perhaps with less scruple acquiesce in the avowed ignorance of the one and employ their thoughts and discourse with more advantage and satisfaction on the other." For "the light of reason shines bright enough for all our purposes."

It is quite in keeping with this method of compromise that Locke does not, like Hobbes, regard society and individual rights as the creation of contract, but assuming both already to exist, he holds that a contract is made between society and the government for the protection of the rights which already exist. Nor does he maintain that the contract is absolute; as proceeding originally from the will of the people, it is subject to perpetual revision as circumstances may require; a

view which manifestly affirms and denies contract in the same breath. For if, as Locke says, the grossest absurdities must be the issue of "following custom when reason has left the custom," we are really affirming that the constitution of the state is the product of reason, and not of the arbitrary agreement of individuals.

Locke is a strong advocate of toleration in matters of religion; but he bases it on the principle that, as absolute certainty is not obtainable in such matters, but only probability, no sect may reasonably assume that it has a monopoly of truth. This latitudinarian doctrine does not hinder him from maintaining that from this toleration must be excluded the atheist, because "the taking away of God dissolves all," and the Roman Catholic, who swears allegiance to a *foreign* potentate.

A like inconsistency runs through the whole of his theory of knowledge. In the *Essay* he brings forward a host of reasons to show that there are in the human mind no innate ideas—no ideas, that is, which are possessed by all men as a sort of original stock of which they can give no further account. In this denial Locke, no doubt, meant to strike a blow at the theory that there are notions which will not yield up their meaning to the reason of man but must be accepted on authority. But so little grasp had he of the principles implied

in his own criticism that he makes all knowledge consist in the passive reception of ideas of reality of which nothing can be said but that they "obtrude themselves on our minds." For it is Locke's doctrine that all knowledge is derived from our own immediate feelings, and that of things in themselves we have, strictly speaking, no knowledge. Now, if we apply this principle thoroughly and consistently, it is plain we can have no real knowledge, not even probable knowledge, of anything.

Again, Locke distinguishes between primary and secondary qualities of body, maintaining that the former we know just as they are in external things, while the latter are but sensations in us to which some changes in bodies probably correspond, but of a nature incomprehensible to us. Here it is asserted on the one hand that there are changes in things of which we can know nothing, and, on the other hand, that certain of our sensations reveal to us the properties of things as they actually are. But, manifestly, incomprehensible changes are changes that we cannot know to exist, and no class of sensations can give us a knowledge of the properties of things, if, as Locke says, a sensation is a purely subjective state of the individual mind. Further, Locke by reducing actual knowledge to what is directly present to sense is finally led to "suspect a science of nature to be impossible,"

although, as he characteristically adds, our knowledge of bodies is "sufficient for our purpose."

Such being the character of his political creed and his theory of knowledge, Locke's ethical doctrine, as we might expect, is, like all systems of compromise, essentially self-contradictory.

(1) Locke begins by affirming the freedom of man to act, but the account which he gives of the relations of will, freedom, and desire, is in essence the same as that which is now known as Determinism, or the theory that human actions, like other events, are bound in a chain of necessary causation.

(*a*) Will is said by Locke to be simply the "power of preference." When left to himself a man never does anything which he does not choose to do in preference to something else. It is not correct to say that will is the power of acting on preference. A man has the power of preferring to do one thing rather than another, but he has not always the power of acting as he prefers. For there are actions over which we have no control. A man cannot stop the beating of his heart, or the circulation of the blood, and "a palsy or the stocks hinder his legs from obeying the determination of his mind if it would thereby transfer his body to another place." So there are ideas over which we have no control. "A man on

the rack is not at liberty to lay by the idea of pain, and divert himself with other contemplations." Will or choice is, therefore, wider in its range than freedom.

(*b*) Freedom is the power of acting on preference. A man may prefer what he has no power to execute, as when the paralytic endeavours to walk, but finds himself unable to do so. There can be no freedom where there is no power of choice, but there may well be power of choice where there is no freedom. But freedom, properly speaking, has no meaning except in application to action. An action is either free or compulsory, but we cannot in strictness say that the will is free. A *man* is free when his action is voluntary, but there is no meaning in saying that the *will* is free. It is as "insignificant to ask whether man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square." Will being just a man's power of choosing belongs to the man, as does also freedom to act where there is no compulsion; hence, while we can say that, under certain circumstances, a man is free to act, it is absurd to say that will, the power of choice, possesses freedom, the power of acting upon choice. The two powers are quite distinct, although both belong to the agent. "Powers belong only to agents, and are attributes only of substances, and

not of powers themselves." So that to ask "whether the will be free" is "in effect to ask whether the will be a substance, an agent." We may as properly say that there is a singing faculty which sings, or a dancing faculty which dances, as to say that the will chooses or the understanding thinks, or that the will directs the understanding, or the understanding obeys or obeys not the will.

So far, Locke seems to be defending human freedom, and defending it on thoroughly reasonable grounds. But how little he comprehended the true force of his own contention becomes apparent in his account of desire.

(*c*) Desire is distinct in nature from will. An act of will is simply the act of preferring or choosing to do one thing rather than another. But a man never wills without being prompted to will by some desire. Not only so, but he always wills in accordance with the desire which is strongest. Desire is a feeling of "uneasiness," in other words, a sense of want or craving, and, where there are various conflicting desires, that which is most urgent determines what the man prefers. In more familiar language, the will is determined by the strongest motive.

(2) Having thus distinguished desire from will, and figured them after the manner of the external impact of one material object on another, Locke

goes on to inquire into the nature of the motives by which the will is determined. The motive is in all cases either a desire for pleasure or an aversion from pain.

(*a*) The pleasure desired, as Locke distinctly tells us, is no pleasure in the abstract, no impersonal conception of pleasure, but the imagination of some particular pleasure which to the individual at the time appears desirable.

(*b*) The pleasure which is a motive is therefore what to the man at the time *seems* the greatest pleasure. A man "knows what best pleases him, and that he actually prefers." To say anything else, in fact, would be to deny the basis of Locke's theory of motives, viz., that the "most urgent uneasiness" always is the motive which causes a man to prefer one action to another. A man's motive is determined by his susceptibility to certain pleasures. The epicure will admit that there is great pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge, the studious man that there is pleasure in the gratification of the senses, but, unless the one is moved by the uneasiness of shame or some other motive he will not devote himself to study, nor will the other seek to satisfy his appetite until the desire for food arises in his mind.

What a man wills, then, is always what appears to him at the time to be fitted to bring pleasure.

Happiness in the abstract moves no one, but "only that part, or so much of it, as is considered and taken to make a necessary part of his happiness." It would seem, then, that every one always desires what for him is the greatest good at the time. How then, we naturally ask, can any one be blamed for what he does? If the will is always moved by the most pressing uneasiness, must not a man act in every case as alone he is capable of acting?

(3) To this Locke answers that sometimes we mistake imaginary for real happiness. We are able "to suspend the satisfaction of our desires in particular cases," until we have duly examined whether that which appears good has a tendency to our real happiness. Herein consists the liberty of intellectual beings. The very desire for happiness is a motive to "take care not to mistake or miss it, and suggests caution, deliberation, and wariness in the direction of their particular actions, which are the means to obtain it." We cannot prevent certain pleasures from appearing desirable that may not really bring happiness, but we can suspend our desires and "stop them from determining our wills to any action till we have duly and fairly examined how far they are fitted to bring happiness." This explains why we can say that a man justly incurs punishment. When a

man has once chosen a particular course of action it becomes part of his happiness and raises desire, which again determines his will; but "by a too hasty choice" he may have "imposed on himself wrong measures of good and evil." Hence he is "answerable to himself" for what follows. But how, we ask, is there any need for such a suspension of the desires?

(4) To this Locke answers that present pleasure, just because it is present, assumes an importance that does not properly belong to it. No doubt a man can make no mistake as to what seems to him the greatest pleasure, but in the comparison of present with future pleasure we "often make wrong judgments of them." Hence the necessity of deliberation and suspension of the desires. "Were the pleasure of drinking accompanied, the very moment a man takes off his glass, with that sick stomach and aching head which, in some men, are sure to follow not many hours after, I think nobody, whatever pleasure he had in his cups, would, on these conditions, ever let wine touch his lips; which yet he daily swallows, and the evil side comes to be chosen only by the fallacy of a little difference in time." It is this mental parallax that has to be carefully guarded against. The great use of freedom, therefore, is to "hinder blind precipitancy."

So far, Locke seems to make the end the securing of the greatest pleasure to oneself. But the objection may be made that the resolution of all motives into the desire for individual pleasure does not explain those actions which at least seem to be done purely out of regard for morality, and not because of the pleasure they bring.

(5) Hence Locke tries to reconcile the hedonistic basis of his ethics with the obligation to obey moral law. Moral good and evil consist in the "conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions" to a law imposed upon the individual by some law-maker; and the motive to obey this law is the "pleasure or pain attending its observance or breach." Of these moral rules or laws there are three sorts, with their three different "enforcements" or "sanctions." Wherever there is a law there must also be some reward or punishment annexed to it, for it would be in vain to impose a law unless the law-giver had the power to reward obedience and to punish disobedience by some good and evil that is not the natural product and consequence of the action itself.

The three forms of law are: (1) divine law, (2) civil law, (3) the law of reputation, or the force of public opinion. By divine law is meant the rules which God has set to the actions of man, whether these are discovered by the light of

nature or are disclosed in revelation. The sanction in this case is the rewards and punishments of another life, and the motive to obedience in this as in the other two kinds of law is the pleasure that is imagined as following from compliance with it. The civil law, or rule set by the state to the actions of those who belong to it, enforces its commands by legal penalties, having "power to take away life, liberty, or goods from him who disobeys." Lastly, philosophical law, or the law of public opinion, acts on men by the praise or blame which it tacitly attaches to different actions, according to the judgments, maxims, or fashions of the time.

This theory of Locke was somewhat modified by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, but these thinkers, though they carried the analysis begun by Locke a little further, can hardly be said to have added any new principle. Without giving up the principle that pleasure in some form is the end, Shaftesbury held that, besides the desire for his own pleasure, there is in man a desire that others also should have pleasure. But the two apparently diverse tendencies are virtually reduced to one, in the view that we seek the good of others because the contemplation of their pleasure yields pleasure to ourselves. Moral good to Shaftesbury is that well-balanced desire for our own and others' plea-

sure which is the mark of a "gentleman," and hence this courtly moralist is the foe to all excess, either in the pursuit of one's own or of the public good. Evil is for him very much "bad form." He displays a mild and genial spirit, but he has no comprehension of great moral difficulties.

Hutcheson advances very little on Shaftesbury. Accepting the distinction between the desire for one's own good and the desire for public good, between the "egoistic" and "altruistic" impulses, as it is now the fashion to call them, he further distinguishes between the "blind" and the "calm" affections, the former being defined as immediate or natural tendencies, and the latter as mediate tendencies dependent on reflection. The blind or natural desires are such appetites as hunger and thirst on the one hand, and the emotions of sympathy and pity on the other, while the calm or reflective desires are self-love and benevolence. The "egoistic" desires, whether blind or calm, are useful but not moral, because every one naturally seeks his own good; only the "altruistic" tendencies are morally good and need reinforcement by the "moral sense," by means of which we instinctively recognize good and evil.

In his ethical doctrine, as in other parts of his philosophy, Locke's intentions are good, but the form in which he reflectively grasps and states

his theory is invariably contradictory of the truth which he believes and asserts. Nothing else indeed could come of a philosophy of compromise. A few of the contradictions which beset his doctrine may be pointed out.

(1) Locke is strong in the belief that man is a free agent, and yet his account of the relations of desire, will, and freedom is one which is destructive of that belief.

(*a*) He protests against the prevalent fallacy of endowing the will with an activity of its own, and of regarding freedom as belonging to this self-acting power. It is the *man* who is free, not the man's will. But when we ask, what then is will? all that Locke has to tell us is that it is not freedom to act, and that it is a power or attribute of a substance or agent. It never occurred to him that to make will simply the property of a thing or substance is to destroy the whole meaning of will and personality. To call this willing thing a man, as he elsewhere calls him a thinking thing, is to leave out just that which gives man his distinctive character. For how does this thing called man differ from any other thing? The only difference in Locke's view is that the properties of the thing called man are not the same properties as the thing which we call material. A material thing Locke also sup-

poses to have "powers," the sun, for example, as he tells us, having the power to melt wax.

So far, therefore, as the possession of power goes there is nothing in man to distinguish him from anything else. As a matter of fact the sun has the power of melting wax, and a man has the power of choice, but unless we can show that choice is related to man in a totally different way from that in which the power of melting wax is related to the sun, we cannot draw any real distinction between man and any other thing in nature. That will or choice is a power attaching only to a thinking thing does not make man different in essence from things that do not think but merely act. For in Locke's view to think is simply to have one power, to will is to have another power, but these two powers, while they belong to the one substance, man, are distinct and separate powers. Will, then, is just a peculiar mode of action, not different in kind from the action of the sun in melting wax. Man acts in the way of choice, the sun acts in the way of melting wax, but the one act is no more free than the other.

(*b*) This becomes still more manifest when we look at Locke's account of freedom. Freedom, as he describes it, is simply the fact of acting in a certain way in the absence of external compulsion. Now, when we isolate a man's action from his

will it becomes nothing more than a mode of motion. When a man chooses to walk, the physical movement will take place if his bodily functions are in a normal state, and if he is not withheld from moving by physical compulsion. Certainly, and so the sun will melt wax if no atmospheric or other obstacle interpose to prevent its action. But we do not therefore attribute freedom of action to the sun, and no more can we attribute it to the man. The man has no more power over his body than the sun over the wax. The body moves in certain cases after the man exerts his act of choice, in other cases, as in that of the paralytic, it does not; but in the one case as in the other all that we can say, from Locke's point of view, is that sometimes the movement takes place after the choice, sometimes it does not. Freedom in any sense of the man's power over the physical movement there is not. The movement is as much determined, independently of the man, as the movement of a stone.

(*c*) According to Locke's account of the matter, then, man is free, in any significant sense, neither in his action, nor in his will. Nor is he free in his desires. For desire, as he explains it, is simply the susceptibility to pleasure and pain, and that susceptibility is but another attribute of a thinking

thing. What a man desires is what his nature makes him desire. The student, as he tells us, is peculiarly susceptible to the pleasure which accompanies the pursuit of knowledge, the epicure to the pleasure of the palate, but a man cannot make or unmake himself, and so he cannot give to any desire either more or less power than it has for him as he finds himself to be. The cat takes pleasure in catching mice, and the scholar in amassing knowledge, but the one pleasure like the other springs from the peculiar susceptibility of each. There can, therefore, be no freedom in desire any more than in will or in action; that is, there is in man, on Locke's showing, no freedom at all.

(*d*) We are forced to the same conclusion when we examine the account of the relation of desire and will. Why does the same man will differently on different occasions? The reason is to be sought in the character of desire as the imagination of pleasure. To different persons, or to the same person under different circumstances, one pleasure presents itself in his imagination as preferable to another. Under the impulse for knowledge one man will forget his bodily wants until hunger drives him to his meals, another man will neglect study, and live for the pleasures of sense, unless he is driven to change his course by the

stronger impulse of shame. But as each man's desire is determined not by him but for him, and the desire determines his will, what he prefers in any case is that which alone he can prefer, and freedom is a word without meaning. The strongest "uneasiness" determines the will, and the uneasiness itself is simply the desire for pleasure that at the time is for him, constituted as he is, the strongest; hence a man's actions are as unalterably determined as if he were an automaton. Until we get rid of the fiction that man can be properly spoken of as a thinking, or desiring, or willing *thing*, and that thought is one power, desire another, and will a third, while all three are distinct from action; until we see the fallacy of this mechanical idea of human nature, the freedom of man must remain at the most an ineradicable belief, not a reasoned truth.

(2) I may be reminded that Locke tries to preserve freedom by saying that, although a man cannot prevent certain desires from springing up in his mind, yet he may have the power of "suspending" his desires, and of choosing that course of action which an enlightened reason sets before him as best. That Locke has here expressed what we all feel to be in some sense true there can be no possible doubt, but it is just as certain that here as always his theory will not allow him to prove

what he affirms. For, as Hume afterwards pointed out, granting that the will is always determined by some form of feeling, nothing can produce a suspension of any desire but some other desire. If the mind has the power to prevent desire from acting on the will it must also be able to move the will of itself in the absence of all desire. The suspension of desire, on Locke's principles, must be due to a power or force acting contrary to the desire, and such a power is plainly itself competent to move the will.

But, once admit that the motive to action is something different from a feeling of pleasure, and what becomes of the assertion that the only motive is a feeling of pleasure? Either we must abandon the account of will as due to the "most pressing uneasiness" or we must deny to man the power of suspending desire, as we have denied to him the power of originating action without desire.

(3) In his account of moral good and evil Locke displays a union of good intention and futile performance similar to that displayed in the other part of his theory. He feels that there is a radical distinction between good and evil, but the hedonistic basis of his system will not permit of any justification of that feeling. A good action, he tells us, is one which conforms to law, divine, civil, or philosophical. This law he regards, although he

professes to discard all authority but that of a man's own reason, as externally imposed by a law-giver.

What, then, gives to the law its power over the individual? How does he come to take it into himself and make it the motive of his action? The answer is, that the obligation to obey law means for the agent the pleasure which he believes will result from obedience, and the pain which he is likely to experience should he violate it. But men are not always deterred from running counter to law by the anticipation of the pain that may ensue. Why not? Because to some men the gratification of their immediate desires is a stronger motive, *i.e.* appears as more desirable, than the possible future pain of punishment. But on Locke's own theory the pleasure which acts as a motive is what appears to the man at the time to be most pleasant, and this pleasure he cannot make more or less pleasant than it appears; nor as we have seen can he prevent it from determining his will: how then can a man be blamed for not doing what he has no power to do? If criminal pleasure is to his mind more desirable than lawful pleasure surely he must will it. To say that he *ought* to prefer obedience to law is merely to say that he does not do that which in the long run will bring him most pleasure; but while this may be a

matter for regret, it cannot properly be a matter for blame. The man has done what his nature alone permitted him to do, and he can no more be called morally guilty than the pointer dog which does not point, or the terrier when it does not catch rats. The outcome of Locke's hedonistic theory of morality is thus the destruction of all morality.

CHAPTER VI

HUME

In David Hume we have a thinker who displays none of that disposition to compromise which is characteristic of Locke. Not only is all direct knowledge of things confined to the transient states of one's own consciousness, but it is impossible for us to show that there is any reality distinct from those states. The "substance" of things, which to Locke seemed so mysterious, is only mysterious because it is a fiction of the imagination.

Substantiality just means the reappearance in our consciousness of impressions similar to those which we have formerly had; but the recurrence of the same impression, or bundle of impressions, does not entitle us to say that there is a self-dependent "substance" which continues to exist when we do not perceive it. And as we can never prove the existence of things beyond the

moment of their appearance in our consciousness, it is absurd to speak of the *connection* of things. As there are no "substances" to connect, they cannot be connected. We commonly say that one thing is the cause of another, as, *e.g.* that a fire produces heat in us when we hold our hand to the blaze; but, from the point of view of knowledge, all that we can properly say is that never have we had the feeling of heat without finding it accompanied with the impression or remembrance of fire. The fact that the one feeling has so often been associated with the other raises in us the expectation, when we have the one, that we shall have the other also. This expectation has never been disappointed, but we are not therefore entitled to infer that the uniform relation between the two feelings of fire and heat which has hitherto prevailed *might* not be broken. No amount of repetition can entitle us to affirm *necessary* connection in things; all that we can properly affirm is customary association or uniformity in the succession of our own ideas.

Another thing which Hume sees to follow from Locke's theory of knowledge, when it is developed to its consequences, is that what we call ourselves is not any "substance" or "agent" distinct from the train of feelings that make up our mental life. A man shall in vain search in his con-

sciousness for anything but the vivid impressions of sense or their less vivid copies in memory and imagination. What he really means when he says "I," is the series of ideas which have occurred one by one in his experience. From moment to moment he is conscious of a new feeling, and what he calls himself is just this perpetually changing consciousness.

In his account of the nature of knowledge Hume, as it will be admitted, is not kept from setting his axe to the root of the tree by any sentiment of reverence for the fair growth of man's beliefs. Locke had said that our real knowledge is of our own feelings, and Hume will have no half-hearted measures. If I have a consciousness only of my own feelings, away with your unknowable "substances," material and mental! Let us at least be consistent with ourselves. We may in fact regard Hume as having given the finishing stroke to the individualistic theory of knowledge which began with the sensationalism of Protagoras, was continued by Aristippus and Epicurus, adopted by Hobbes, and formulated by Locke. If any theory has shown itself historically to carry in itself the seeds of its own destruction, it is the theory of sensationalism, that knowledge is of immediate states of feeling.

The watchword of Hume is "Thorough," in his

ethical doctrine as in his theory of knowledge. He will have no oscillation between freedom and necessity, desire and reason, individual pleasure and objective law.

1. Locke denied that there is any propriety in calling the will free; but he seemed to himself to be defending human freedom in saying that the man is free although his will is not. Hume will have no such subterfuge. You may call "spontaneity," *i.e.* action done without compulsion, "freedom" if you please, but the act is in the strictest sense of the term necessitated. What do we mean by "necessity" but uniformity in the succession of events, or rather in the order of our ideas? Tried by this test a man's actions are as necessary as the law of gravitation.

Given two men of exactly the same character and temper, placed in exactly the same circumstances, and they will do exactly the same acts. It is true that sometimes men seem to act without any motive, but this is only because it is difficult to find out what the motive is. Were we perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of their situation and temper, we should see that their act is as rigidly bound in the chains of necessity as those acts the spring of which is open and manifest. That there is a "constant union between motives and actions" is not only

recognized in our ordinary judgments, but all human laws as founded on rewards and punishments assume that "these motives have an influence on the mind, and both produce the good and prevent the evil actions."

2. Having stripped off the disguise in which Locke concealed from himself and others the necessarian character of his doctrine of freedom, Hume completes the work by showing that as the sole motive by which our action is determined is desire for pleasure, reason can have no more power to hinder a desire from acting than to initiate an action of itself. This objection has already been stated, but it may be worth while considering it more fully.

(*a*) Reason alone can never be a motive to any act of the will. In what form is reason exercised? (*a*) It may take the form of the apprehension of such abstract relations as those with which mathematics is concerned. But no one would say that a knowledge of the multiplication table, or of the elements of Euclid, or of the differential calculus, has of itself any influence on a man's action. No doubt it is important to know that $7+5=12$, when you wish to pay an account, but that important piece of knowledge will not determine you to pay the account. "Abstract or demonstrative reasoning, therefore, never in-

fluences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects." (*β*) Is reason as concerned with the causal relations of things a motive to action? It is obvious enough that our desires bring the reason into play. If a merchant is afraid of bankruptcy he will naturally cast about in his mind for some means of escape from so grave a calamity. But this act of reason, by which the relation of means to ends is grasped, does not give rise to any impulse to action; but, on the contrary, the impulse to action gives rise to the act of reason. The merchant would not trouble himself to think out the possible causes of insolvency, were it not that his feeling of aversion from pain is so strong as to drive him to it. "Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connection can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connection, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us." Hence it is concluded that neither in its scientific form as the apprehension of abstract truth, nor in its practical form as the knowledge of causes, can reason be a motive to action.

(*b*) As reason alone can never produce any action, it is incapable of "disputing the preference with any passion or emotion." The only

way in which reason could prevent volition would be by giving an impulse in a contrary direction to our passion, and that impulse, had it operated alone, would have been able to produce volition. Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, the latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause, as well as to hinder, any act of volition. But if reason has no original influence, it is impossible that it should withstand any principle which has such an efficacy, or ever keep the mind in suspense for a moment.

Thus it appears that the principle which opposes our passion cannot be the same with reason, and is only called so in an improper sense. "We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." The motive, then, to all action comes from the desire for pleasure or the aversion from pain, and the sole function of practical reason is to show us the means by which we may best obtain the one and avoid the other.

3. The desires, or "passions," as he calls them, Hume divides ostensibly into two classes, the

"direct" and the "indirect," but he virtually adds to these a third class.

(*a*) The "direct" passions are those which at once spring up in the mind on the contemplation of an object. When a man sees or thinks of a beautiful house, *e.g.* he cannot prevent the feeling of its desirability from springing up in his mind. If, again, there is a certainty or strong probability that he will himself get possession of it, he feels the emotion of joy. Should the likelihood of possession somewhat preponderate, he experiences hope, and if some exertion on his part is needed to secure the house, there arises volition or will. These four passions of desire, joy, hope, and volition, with the opposite states of aversion, grief, and fear, constitute the direct passions.

(*b*) The "indirect" passions of pride and humility, love and hatred, involve the reference of the feeling of pleasure to ourselves or others. Pleasure in contemplating any beautiful object belonging to ourself gives rise to pride, when the object belongs to another it excites the feeling of love. The term "love," it must be understood, is used by Hume to cover all feelings for another's welfare, varying from simple esteem to intense passion.

(*c*) The third class of "passions," not expressly allowed for by Hume, but mentioned by him, are those which take the form of a natural impulse or

instinct. Such are the bodily appetites, the instinct for revenge, and the social instinct. These do not so much proceed from the desire for pleasure and pain, as give rise to pleasure and pain. This distinction does not, however, prevent Hume from speaking of them as if they were themselves desires for pleasure.

4. The motive, then, which leads a man to act is always one of the passions. The next question is: How do we come to call some actions virtuous and others vicious? What is the source of moral approbation and disapprobation? Locke's view was, that action is morally good when it is done out of regard for law. But this seems to place morality in something entirely distinct from the desire for pleasure. Hume cannot allow this discrepancy between the assertion that pleasure is the motive of all actions, and the assertion that some actions are done not from pleasure but from respect for law, to pass unchallenged; and so he seeks to show that all actions called virtuous are so called because of the pleasure which they give to one who contemplates their general tendency.

(*a*) To explain the feeling of moral approbation, the passion of sympathy is in some cases sufficient. On this principle Hume accounts for the manner in which we view benevolent actions. Because we can put ourselves at the point of view of others,

we come to look away from the immediate effects of actions on ourselves, and to sympathize with the pleasure which they tend to produce in others. We do not directly approve or blame our own actions. A benevolent act done by ourselves calls up in us the feeling of pride. Primarily, we sympathize with the pleasure or pain of others, and by this constant tendency to sympathy our own feelings are limited.

(*b*) Nothing more than sympathy is needed to explain those acts which directly excite in us a feeling of pleasure or pain. But what is to be said of those acts the immediate effect of which is to produce in us a feeling of pain, and which we yet morally approve? How, in other words, are we to account for moral judgments in regard to laws of justice? Justice is an "artificial" virtue, *i.e.* it gives rise to the pleasure of moral approbation, not directly, but indirectly. But Hume endeavours to show that the pleasure felt in just acts is developed out of the pleasure of direct sympathy with benevolent acts, and rests on the same fundamental desire for pleasure. Hume speaks of society as resting upon contract, and as based upon self-interest; but he does not, like Hobbes, suppose rights to be brought into existence by the contract, nor does he adopt the view of Locke, that rights exist before government, and are only confirmed by it. His view is that rules of justice proceed from

the same source which causes men to keep their promises.

Naturally, we desire our own good and the good of those who are related to us by ties of blood or by personal intercourse. Moreover, external goods are insufficient to satisfy the wants of all. Hence, from the "selfishness and confined generosity" of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, justice "derives its origin." Justice is thus not "natural," but "artificial." Reflection on the general loss caused by the insecurity of property leads to a "tacit convention," entered into by all the members of a society, to abstain from each other's possessions.

But why is an observance of the rules of justice called virtue, and their violation vice? Certainly not, as Locke thought, because they are imposed by an external authority upon the individual. The explanation must be sought in the desire for pleasure, which leads to the establishment of justice. Hume's explanation is that, so long as the community is small, men can see at a glance what is for their own interest, and hence self-interest is a sufficient motive. But as society expands, what is for one's interest is no longer self-evident, and some other principle has to come into play. That principle is sympathy; by which

is to be understood the feeling of pleasure which arises in a man's mind when he contemplates an action done by another, the tendency of which is to bring pleasure to the community.

The feeling of sympathy by which Hume explains the artificial virtue of justice is thus a special sort of pleasure differing from all other pleasures. It is a feeling of pleasure that arises in our mind when we look at an act apart from our own interest, and view it in its general tendency. We do not feel moral approbation for every act that brings pleasure to another, but only for those acts that have a general tendency to bring pleasure. Sympathy with the joy of his wife and family would naturally lead us to approve of a criminal's escape from punishment, but when we reflect that the tendency of his acts is to produce an excess of pain to the community, our sympathy takes a reverse direction and we approve of his condemnation. Thus moral approbation is a feeling in the mind of one who adopts the attitude of an impartial spectator; it is that sympathetic pleasure which arises from the perception of an action as conducive to the interests of others.

5. Granting that we have explained the origin of law and custom, and accounted for our moral approbation of acts in accordance with them without departing from the principle that all actions are

done from the desire of pleasure, the question still remains to be answered: What is the motive to virtue? Why should I obey law? Hume startles us by saying that no action can be virtuous unless it proceeds from some motive distinct from the sense of its moral obligation. This paradoxical conclusion follows from his premises. The motive to any action must always be a desire of some kind. Why do we blame a father for neglecting his child? Not because he disobeys law in neglecting him, but because he shows a want of natural affection. Why do we regard the philanthropist as virtuous, if not because of his benevolent feelings? The father who takes care of his children, or the man who does humane acts, merely because he thinks that he ought to do so, is really moved by the desire to become, or to appear to himself, what he is not. In other words, a man's good actions proceed either from "pride," *i.e.* the pleasure which he takes in what belongs to himself, or from "love," the pleasure accruing from that which is pleasant to others. To the agent the motive is, in plain words, desire for the good opinion of his neighbours.

(1) Hume has presented with unexampled clearness and force the individualistic theory of the will. If the consciousness of man is just the series of feelings that occur to him, there can be no

element in human action that is not equally manifest in other events. A certain feeling of desire, having a certain degree of intensity, arises in us, the only account we can give of which is that as a matter of fact it does occur and has the intensity we find it to have; and this feeling is followed by another feeling which we distinguish as volition. In reason, as simply the series of feelings themselves, there can of course be nothing but what is found in the feelings; and hence "reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions," or, even more correctly, reason is itself the passions. The only way to avoid the necessarianism of Hume is to challenge the account which he gives of the nature of the human mind. Now the radical mistake in that account is in the reduction of consciousness to a mere flow of feelings. Were our mental life really of that nature, we should not even be able, as Hume assumes we are, to have the illusion that we ourselves are not merely our own feelings. This may be shown by looking at the connection of desire and will.

Suppose that in a man's consciousness there suddenly springs up the craving of hunger, which is followed by the impulse to eat, an impulse which is succeeded by the physical movement of eating food that chances to be within reach. Here plainly there is no balancing of desires, no consciousness

of different objects as desirable, and no willing of one of those objects; the succession of the feeling of want, the impulse to eat, and the external series of movements is of the same nature as the movement of one billiard ball when it is struck by another, which itself follows the motion of the cue in the hand of the player. But, it may be said, add to the original want of hunger other wants, and a conflict will ensue between them. And no doubt this is a fairly correct account of what takes place in the case of some animals. A dog prompted by hunger, it may be said, will steal a piece of meat, unless the natural shrinking from a stick turns out to be a stronger impulse. It is doubtful if this is an adequate account even of the action of the dog. If it is, we do not require to suppose more than that a stronger feeling arises and repels the weaker, which then has the field to itself, and issues in physical movement as in the case of the billiard ball. Whatever may be said of the animal, such an explanation is quite inadequate when applied to man, and yet this is the representation of human action adopted by Hume and by individualistic moralists generally. But it does not really exhaust all that is implied in volition. When a man wills, he does not simply contemplate the struggle of different desires, waiting until one has established its superior strength over another:

a desire is his consciousness of a certain end as seemingly fitted to satisfy him.

Now this idea of a possible satisfaction implies the contrast of his actual self as he knows it at the time of the desire and his ideal self as he conceives that it will be after the series of acts by which the desire has been carried into effect. The force or intensity of the desire is thus the same thing as the consciousness of himself as he may be. But there is no one desire which exhausts that consciousness. Hence the possibility of the repeated comparison of different ideals of himself with one another. What, then, takes place when the man passes from desire to will? Not a mere blind struggle between opposing desires, ending in the victory of the strongest. The act of will consists in the man identifying his good for the time with one of the different ideals of himself which he is capable of forming. The ideal he could not have without reason, nor could he will it without reason; hence reason, so far from being the "slave of the passions," is itself will. Will, in other words, is just reason in that form in which it implies self-identification with an end presented by reason to itself. Only a rational being can think of ends, and so think of them as to realize them in his experience. The process of self-realization is will.

No true conception of the nature of human

action is possible until it is seen that passion and reason, desire and will, are not abstract opposites. Such an opposition implies that an unreflected feeling of pleasure or pain, as it may exist in beings that are not self-conscious, is the same in nature with the emotions of thinking beings. Pleasure as an immediate feeling, and the desire for pleasure, are not the same thing. No man desires pleasure purely for itself; he desires it because he imagines that, having obtained it, he will experience a satisfaction of his ideal self. The striving after satisfaction thus implies a contrast between what *is* and what *ought* to be. Every man in virtue of his self-conscious nature must seek after complete self-realization. There is therefore implied in the passions or natural inclinations a striving after ideal perfection, *i.e.* a man's acts are really directed towards a rational end. The contrast of passion and reason is therefore not an absolute one.

Similarly, when it is said that the strongest motive or passion means the will, motives are conceived after the fashion of an external force which push the will in different directions, the volition being the resultant of their combined action. That is to say, desire is one thing and will another. Desire is related to will as an external force to the object which it sets in motion.

This whole mode of thought is unsound. Desire is not the opposite of will, it is simply will before it has issued in activity. When I desire to do a certain act or series of acts, I set before myself the end which I wish to achieve, and, having the consciousness of that end, I am said to be in a state of desire. Desire, therefore, involves a state of tension between myself as I now am, and myself as I think of myself as capable of becoming. This contrast of the present and the possible self is of the essence of desire. The end which I set before myself is that which explains why it is that I act in a particular way. What is the difference between this condition of desire and the condition of willing the act? What takes place when I pass from the desire of the end to the willing of the end? Does the desire act externally upon the will? That is the ordinary conception, but it is plainly inadequate. When I will the end which I have set before myself, I identify myself in consciousness with the end. Such an identification would be impossible if I had no consciousness of myself. Were there no self-consciousness there would be nothing but a blind impulse followed by an unintelligent act. But I am self-conscious; I can conceive of this end as one which to me it seems good to realize. I think the end, and I identify myself in thought with the end, and this peculiar form of thinking constitutes willing.

Willing is not the same thing as the mechanical movement, which is its external expression; it is absolutely and entirely a form of thought, and as such belongs to the realm of self-consciousness.

Desire, then, is the consciousness of an end, as one which it is good to realize. Will is self-identification with that end. The difference is that what in desire is conceived of as an end to be realized is in will conceived of as an end now being realized. Hence, desire and will are just the same self-conscious being now as capable of realizing an end, and again as realizing that end.

(2) As, then, man's "passions" are not resolvable into mere units of feeling, the distinction of "direct" and "indirect" passions is inadmissible. (*a*) No passions enter into consciousness so as to become motives without being transformed in the process. Hence, all passions are "indirect," *i.e.* all imply determination by the idea of the self as capable of existing in a completed form. (*b*) Nor can we distinguish pride and love as dealing respectively with oneself and others. I cannot be conscious of myself except in relation to other selves, and I cannot relate any desirable object to myself without also relating it to other persons. Hence pride, as well as love, implies the relation of the individual to others. No man would take pride in a fine estate were it not that he values the good opinion

of others. (*c*) There are in man no mere appetites or instinctive feelings, or at least these do not lead to acts which can be referred to the agent. Appetite as it enters into consciousness is known for what it is, its end is discerned by the thinking being, and, being brought into relation with the idea of himself, it takes the form of desire, which, as we have seen, is incipient will.

(3) Hume tries to explain moral judgments by means of sympathy. But he does not attempt to explain sympathy itself. Now, sympathy is not really a feeling of pleasure in the pleasure of others; it is, properly understood, just reason itself. If, like Hume, we continue to regard it as a peculiar feeling on the same level as other feelings, there is no proper justification for moral judgments, except that we cannot help having them. We contemplate the action of one man who acts from the immediate desire for his own pleasure, and, finding that his acts tend to bring on the whole more pain than pleasure, we cannot avoid having a disagreeable feeling of moral disapprobation.

But, after all, this feeling may be, for aught Hume can show, unreasonable. The only way in which we can really show the absoluteness of moral judgments is by basing them upon reason. Then sympathy is raised into the form of the judgment that an act is right or wrong, according as it does or

does not tend to the realization of the ideal or spiritual nature. An act is not right because it is felt to be so, but we feel it to be so because it is right. Moral good thus means conformity to the ideal standard set up by reason and willed by reason. The true motive to a good action is therefore not, as Hume makes it, love of reputation, but desire to conform to the ideal of reason. Hence, a man is prepared to endure the ill opinion of his neighbours, when that opinion conflicts with the revelation of the higher life flashed upon him by his own more sensitive conscience.

CHAPTER VII

BENTHAM

It may safely be said that no hedonistic system subsequent to Hume has added anything to the general doctrine, but has either introduced distinctions belonging to an earlier stage of its devolopment or has ennobled it by the introduction of conceptions that are inconsistent with its fundamental principle. That all actions are determined by the desire for pleasure; that the pleasure which to the individual at the moment seems strongest determines the will; that reason has no power to originate, to retard, or to prevent action, but is a purely formal, or theoretical activity; that there is no "innate faculty" or "moral sense" belonging to man in his natural state, but that moral judgments are resolvable into a peculiar form of pleasure; that justice is a means of obtaining security for life and property, and so of securing the greatest pleasure of society as a whole; and

that a man's motive in doing a benevolent or just act is ultimately a regard for his own pleasure;—these are the main features of a hedonism that is as self-consistent as hedonism can be made, and they are all clearly set forth by Hume.

Jeremy Bentham is a thinker rather of the type of Hobbes, than of the type of Hume. His predominant interest is in the advancement of social well-being, and keeping this end ever before him, he presents us with a doctrine having in it much higher elements than any of his predecessors, but higher elements which logically have no place in a hedonistic theory of conduct. Destitute of the speculative subtlety of Hume, he tries not so much to reconcile his hedonism with the principle that morality consists in doing actions which secure the greatest good of the greatest number, as to show how hedonism may be practically applied in the regulation of the actions of private individuals, and to the improvement of legislation. Especially in the latter respect his writings have been of great practical value, a value which, as it may be fairly said, is independent of what he believed to be the motive of all actions, the desire for one's own pleasure.

We shall, I think, best appreciate the strength and the weakness of Bentham by viewing him as a writer who above all things was interested in an

analysis of the springs of human conduct, with a view to finding the most effective means of improving society by acting upon them. Hence his elaborate classification of the various pleasures which serve as motives, his endless divisions and subdivisions, and his continual insistence on the principle that "every one is to count for one and no one for more than one." Bentham is really attempting to construct a system of conduct that shall serve as a guide in actual life. Whether such a system can be constructed or not, we are at least entitled to demand that it should not be based upon inconsistent principles.

Let us look at the main points in Bentham's doctrine.

1. He has no hesitation in rejecting as false all other principles except that of "utility," the principle which "approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question." The adverse principles which he criticizes are those of *asceticism* and *sympathy and antipathy*.

(*a*) Asceticism he defines as "that principle, which, like the principle of utility, approves or disapproves of any action, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest

is in question; but in an inverse manner, approving of actions in as far as they tend to diminish his happiness; disapproving of them in as far as they tend to augment it." Such a representation, or rather misrepresentation, of asceticism is a curious instance of the extraordinary want of intellectual sympathy which is characteristic of Bentham. That the end of life is to get as much pain as possible is a mere caricature of ascetic morality. What has given that mode of thought a peculiar fascination to many minds is that it opposes the higher or spiritual life to the lower, and maintains that the former can only be obtained by the complete sacrifice of the latter. The end is therefore from the ascetic point of view, not the production of pain, but the transcendence of the pleasures of the flesh by means of self-mortification, which is believed to be the only "way to the blessed life."

(*b*) Bentham is more successful in detecting the weakness of the second principle to which he objects. The principle of "sympathy and antipathy," is, as he contends, "rather a principle in name than in reality." To say that an action is good merely because it is *felt* to be good is the negation of all principle. One man says that a thing is right because his "moral sense" tells him so; another appeals to "common sense," and conveniently leaves out "the sense of those whose

sense is not the same" as his own; a third speaks of an "eternal and immutable rule of right," but when he comes to particulars you find that he really means what *he* thinks to be right; others appeal to the "law of nature" or "natural justice" or "right reason." In all these cases recourse is had to one's own feeling, which affords no standard of conduct at all.

2. Having thus cleared away the rubbish, Bentham goes to work with great energy to construct an edifice of morals on the basis of hedonism.

The end is the securing of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It is necessary, therefore, if we are to determine action in conformity with this end, to know how pleasures vary in value. Considered by itself a pleasure or pain is greater or less according to (*a*) intensity, (*b*) duration, (*c*) certainty or uncertainty, (*d*) propinquity or remoteness; to which must be added, when we are estimating the value of an *act* (*e*) fecundity, or the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the *same* kind, (*f*) its purity, or the chance it has of not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind. When we are estimating the pleasures of a number of persons, we must add (*g*) extent, *i.e.* the number of persons who are affected by it. To determine the general tendency of an act, is to strike a balance between the pleasures and pains associated with it. If the

pleasure is in excess the act is good, if the pain is in excess the act is bad. As an illustration of the method of determining value by a calculation of pleasures and pains, Bentham cites the instance of a landed estate, which a man values for the pleasures it will bring and the pain it will enable him to avoid, while its value rises according to the *length of time* he is to have possession and the *nearness* of the time he is to come into possession of it. The other circumstances which go to make up the quantity of the man's pleasure, the *intensity*, *fecundity*, and *purity* of the pleasures, are not considered beforehand because they vary with the use which each person may come to make of the estate. This process of calculation is not pursued in every case, but it may always be kept in view, and the more fully it is carried out the nearer will it approach to the character of an exact one.

Not only do pleasures differ in quantity, but they are distinguished according to their exciting causes, and these are subdivided into (*a*) single, (*b*) complex. Fourteen different sorts or kinds of pleasure are mentioned, viz., pleasures of sense, wealth, skill, amity, good name, power, piety, benevolence, malevolence, memory, imagination, expectation, association, relief. A further division of even greater importance is into (1) self-regarding, (2) extra-

regarding, the latter comprehending the pleasures of benevolence and the pleasures of malevolence, all the rest belonging to the former class. It is admitted by Bentham that the quantity of pleasure and pain is not excited by a given cause, is not the same in different persons. One man may be most affected by the pleasures of the taste; another by those of the ear. The various circumstances which influence the sensibility are enumerated by Bentham, and are such as health, strength, hardness, bodily imperfection, knowledge, moral sensibility, etc.

3. Bentham's next attempt is to determine what enters into and constitutes the character of human actions; and here he distinguishes, (*a*) the *act* itself, (*b*) the *circumstances* in which it is done, (*c*) the *intentionality* that may have accompanied it, (*d*) the *consciousness* that may have accompanied it, (*e*) the *motive* which gives rise to it, (*f*) the *disposition* which it indicates.

The *intention* may regard either the act itself or its consequences. The act may be intentional but not the consequences, as when you may intend to touch a man without intending to hurt him, and yet as a matter of fact you may chance to hurt him. But the consequences cannot be intentional without the act being intentional. If you do not intend the act, the consequences are not

intended. People often speak of a good or bad intention, but this is an imperfect way of speaking. Nothing is either good or bad but pain or pleasure, or things that are the causes or preventives of pain and pleasure. A man certainly intends his act, but he cannot strictly speaking be said to intend the consequences. He may be *conscious* or not conscious of them, but he does not intend them. If I take a prescription which is furnished me by a physician, I *intend* to take it, but I cannot be said to intend the consequences; I can only *know* or not know what the consequences will be. No intention therefore can be called either good or bad, since goodness and badness are dependent upon the consequences in the way of pleasure or pain.

The *motive* to an act must be distinguished from the intention. The only motives with which we are concerned are those which act upon the will. Now, to be governed by any motive a man must look beyond his action to the consequences of it. "A fire breaks out in your neighbour's house; you are under apprehension of its extending to your own; you are apprehensive that if you stay in it you will be burnt; you accordingly run out of it. This then is the act, the others are all motives to it." A motive is "substantially nothing more than pleasure or pain, operating in a

certain manner." Now, "pleasure is in *itself* a good; nay, even setting aside freedom from pain, the only good; pain is in itself an evil; and indeed, without exception, the only evil. And this is alike true of every sort of pain, and of every sort of pleasure. It follows, therefore, that *there is no such thing as any sort of motive that is in itself a bad one.*" If motives are good or bad it is only on account of their effects; good, on account of their tendency to produce pleasure, or avert pain; bad, on account of their tendency to produce pain, or avert pleasure. The various motives correspond to the different sorts of pleasure. Frequently a man is acted upon by different motives at the same time: "one motive or set of motives, acting in one direction; another motive, or set of motives, acting as it were in an opposite direction."

Is there nothing, then, about a man that can properly be termed good or bad? Yes, certainly; his *disposition.* But the disposition is good or bad according to its effects in the production of pleasure and pain. When a man is accustomed to do acts which bring more pleasure than pain to the community, we say that he has a good disposition.

4. Bentham, then, places goodness and badness entirely in the disposition of the agent, as determined by the view which is taken of the tendency

of his act combined with his view of its consequences. The question arises whether there is any difference between pleasures such as entitles us to speak of the disposition of a man as good or bad in a moral sense. A man's disposition is good when the tendency of his act is good, *i.e.* when it produces pleasure, and when he acts from an extra-regarding motive. But is the distinction of motives into the two classes of self-regarding and extra-regarding tenable? Bentham virtually admits that it is not. The only motive that can be brought to bear upon a man is "his own pain and pleasure." "On the occasion of every act he exercises every human being is led to pursue that line of conduct which, according to his view of the case taken by him at the moment, will be in the highest degree contributory to his own happiness." Whether, therefore, the man's motive is called self-regarding or extra-regarding, the motive is ultimately a desire for his own greatest pleasure.

5. Bentham distinguishes, however, between "private ethics" and the "art of legislation," endeavouring to determine the limits of each. "Ethics at large may be defined as the art of directing men's actions to the production of the greatest possible quantity of happiness." Private ethics is the art of self-government, or "the art of directing a man's own actions." Government or legislation is the art

of directing the actions of other agents so as to produce a maximum of pleasure in the whole community. The quality which a man manifests in discharging his duty to himself ("if duty it is to be called") is that of *prudence*. In so far as his behaviour may affect the interests of those about him, it may be said to depend upon his *duty to others*. To forbear from diminishing the happiness of one's neighbour is *probity*; to add something to his happiness is *beneficence*. If it is asked, why should I obey the dictates of *probity* and *beneficence*? Bentham answers that, while "the only interests which a man at all times and upon all occasions is sure to find *adequate* motives for consulting are his own," yet, "there are no occasions in which a man has not some motives for consulting the happiness of other men. In the first place, he has, on all occasions, the purely social motive of sympathy or benevolence; in the next place, he has, on most occasions, the semi-social motives of love, of amity, and love of reputation. The motive of sympathy will act upon him with more or less effect, according to the bias of his sensibility; the two other motives, according to a variety of circumstances, principally according to the strength of his intellectual powers, the firmness and steadiness of his mind, the quantum of his moral sensibility, and the characters of the

people he has to deal with." As private ethics and legislation have the same end in view, viz., the happiness of every member of the community, to a certain extent they go hand in hand. How then do they differ? They differ in so far as the acts with which they are concerned are "not *perfectly and throughout* the same." "There is no case in which a private man ought not to direct his own conduct to the production of his own happiness, and of that of his fellow creatures; but there are cases in which the legislation ought not to attempt to direct the conduct of the several other members of the community. Every act which promises to be beneficial upon the whole to the community (himself included) each individual ought to perform of himself; but it is not every such act that the legislator ought to compel him to perform." There are, then, actions with which legislation may not interfere, but which are left to private ethics. What are these cases?

(*a*) Legislation should not interfere where punishment would be inefficacious. It is useless, for example, to punish a man for not obeying a law that has not been duly announced beforehand; and yet, admitting the law to be a wise one, the action prohibited is pernicious in its consequences, and is, therefore, contrary to "private ethics." Where no law would be of any efficacy, as in

the case of an insane person, neither is there any private law. But the main region in which private ethics operates of itself is in cases where punishment would be unprofitable. Thus, when the guilty person will in all likelihood escape detection, especially if the temptation to commit the offence is very strong, or when there is danger of the innocent being punished, the matter is one that private ethics alone should deal with. An instance of the latter is treachery or ingratitude.

(*b*) "Of the rules of moral duty, those which stand least in need of the assistance of legislation are the rules of *prudence.* It can only be through some defect on the part of the understanding, if a man be ever deficient in point of duty to himself." All that the legislator can hope to do is "to increase the efficacy of private ethics, by giving strength and direction to the influence of the moral sanction. With what chance of success, for example, would a legislator go about to extirpate drunkenness and fornication by dint of legal punishment? Not all the tortures which ingenuity could invent would compass it; and, before he had made any progress worth regarding, such a mass of evil would be produced by the punishment, as would exceed a thousandfold the utmost possible mischief of the offence. The great difficulty would be in the procuring evidence; an object which could not be attempted

with any probability of success, without spreading dismay through every family, tearing the bonds of sympathy asunder, and rooting out the influence of all the social motives." Legislative interference is even worse in matters of religion. Louis XIV., for example, out of pure sympathy and loving kindness was led into coercive measures which produced "all the miseries which the most determined malevolence could have devised."

(*c*) The rules of *probity* are those which stand most in need of assistance on the part of the legislator, and in which, in point of fact, his interference has been most extensive. "There are few cases, if any, in which it would not be expedient to punish a man for injuring his neighbour." Here, in fact, "we must first know what are the dictates of legislation, before we can know what are the dictates of private ethics."

(*d*) The rules of *beneficence* must necessarily be left in great measure to private ethics; for, as a rule, the beneficial quality of the act depends upon its being free and voluntary. To sum up: "Private ethics teaches how each man may dispose himself to pursue the course most conducive to his own happiness, by means of such motives as offer of themselves; the act of legislation teaches how a multitude of men, composing a community, may be disposed to pursue that course which, upon the

whole, is the most conducive to the happiness of the whole community, by means of motives to be applied by the legislator." Bentham adds, that social opinion and religion have also sanctions of their own, but the former not infrequently runs counter to the public good, while the influence of the latter is weak and uncertain in its action.

Through the whole of Bentham's ethical theory there runs an ambiguity which imparts to it a delusive air of plausibility and consistency. The founder of the modern school of Utilitarianism has fixed for it the main outlines of the common creed, and his doctrine, like that of his disciples, rests upon two distinct and even contradictory principles.

(1) Bentham's attempt to show that pleasures and pains may be balanced against one another by being separately summed up, rests upon a confusion between pleasure and pain as feelings and as objects of thought. Let us take Bentham's own instance of the man who thinks of buying an estate. He calls up in imagination the various pleasures which are associated with it, and the quantity of each of these he multiplies by the time he expects to enjoy them, adding to the sum the extra amount of pleasure connected with immediate possession. Now, it is here implied that each of the pleasures that go to form the whole sum has a certain precise

degree of intensity which can be, at least approximately, determined beforehand. But Bentham himself points out that pleasures vary according to the susceptibility of the individual. Now, surely that means that no pleasure has any quantity apart from its relation to the idea of one's self as the subject of the pleasure. Thus the quantity of the pleasure means the thought of a certain object as a means of bringing satisfaction to the man who anticipates it. What the man really does is to compare different means of self-satisfaction, and to pronounce that certain objects will, as he believes, judging from his own past experience, be a better means of realizing himself than certain other objects. He is not contrasting feelings of pleasure as such, but he is comparing himself in one ideal set of circumstances with himself in another ideal set of circumstances. Take away this conception of himself, and he is unable to say that any one pleasure has more or less quantity than another. Always, when he says that one pleasure is greater than another, he tacitly adds, greater *for me*, and for those of like nature with me. But if the conception of himself as a permanent subject capable of satisfaction in various defined ways is what gives meaning to the supposed calculus of pleasures, is it not plain that not pleasure as a mere feeling, but pleasure as the possible satisfaction of his ideal self, is what really determines

whether, in the case mentioned, he shall buy the estate?

(2) It follows from this that not pleasure, as Bentham supposes, but the realization of man's nature in its ideal perfection is the end of all action. When we set aside as inconsistent with the highest conduct anything with which a man may, as a matter of fact, seek to satisfy himself, we can justify our judgment only on the ground that it is incompatible with the idea of perfect manhood. The man, we say, is trying to violate his true nature. The idea of himself which he is seeking to realize is incompatible with the idea of himself of which he is at least obscurely conscious. The prodigal wastes his substance in riotous living, but at last "he comes to himself." Contrasting what he has been trying to realize with the ideal of himself, he is visited with repentance, as he becomes aware of how poor is his real as compared with his ideal self. Thus arises the idea of what he ought to be, as contrasted with what he is. At first the notion of moral obligation is negative. "I have not done," he says, "what I ought to have done." And so he condemns himself in the presence of the unrealized self. But this is only the beginning of a change of life. What he *ought* to do is not merely the negative idea that what he *is* is inconsistent with what he *ought* to be, but in this negation there is already the "promise

and potency" of what he may become. Thus he goes on to fill up the ideal of himself as he should be, and he adds, "I will arise and go to my father."

(3) Bentham's account of intentionality or will is beset with a similar imperfection. A man intends to do an act, but his intention has nothing to do with the consequences of his act, to himself or others. Now, if we thus separate an act from its consequences it ceases to have any moral character, and hence Bentham naturally says that no intention is either good or bad. The truth is that an act which is isolated in this way is not an act at all, but is simply a physical movement. The act of taking a physician's prescription, viewed in itself, is not viewed as a distinctively human act. But no one takes a prescription without some end in view. He desires the removal of something which interferes with the healthy discharge of the bodily functions, and he desires health because that is included in his idea of himself as he ought to be. Thus the intention is properly the willing of a certain act as the *means* to a given end. But there can be no willing of an act as a means, unless there is the consciousness of the end to which it is the means. The intention, therefore, is just the willing of the means by which a preconceived end is sought to be obtained.

(4) Bentham makes a similar separation between

motive and consequences. The motive, he says, is always a desire for pleasure, and as pleasure is always a good, no motive is in itself bad. Now, certainly if we separate a motive from the consequences of an act, the motive is not bad, and neither is it good; it simply has no moral character. What this shows is that a feeling of pleasure as such is not a motive at all. The motive is always the desire for the realization of one's self. Apart from such an ideal self, a motive can only be regarded as a feeling that arises spontaneously in the mind, and is followed by a certain external movement. But no motive is of this character. When a man acts from the motive of benevolence, he does so because he has set before himself this end as one of the ways in which his ideal nature may be realized. Thus from the very character of the motive, it involves the consequences; only the consequences must not be conceived, as they are by Bentham, as merely the relation of an external movement to other external movements which follow as its effects. The consequences which a man sets before himself are consequences in the way of fulfilling his ideal of himself, and which, therefore, enter into and form his character; and these are good or bad according as they do or do not make for that end. Thus the motive and the consequences are the same thing, viewed, the former from the side of the willing

agent, and the latter from the side of the object which he wills. So regarded, every motive has a distinct moral character as good or bad.

(5) Bentham holds that the only thing that can be called good is a man's disposition. By this he means that a man's act is good if, on the whole, his acts tend to produce more pleasure than pain. This is another way of saying that no intention is properly either good or bad. This is almost expressly said by Bentham when he tells us that a man's disposition is "the sum of his intentions," and it is implied in his virtual definition of a "good" disposition as one which is "beneficial," and of a "bad" disposition as one which is "mischievous." Thus a man's disposition is not strictly good or bad in any sense conveying moral praise or blame. That this should follow from Bentham's view of the will is not in the least surprising. It follows, as a matter of course, from the doctrine that will is merely the effect of certain motives that depend upon "the degree of a man's sensibility."

(6) We now come to that part of Bentham's system, in which his false analysis of human nature exhibits itself in an almost open conflict of two diverse principles. Granting that pleasure is at once the end and the motive to action, the question still remains: Whose pleasure? Is the end the production of the greatest amount of

pleasure to each individual, or to the greatest number of individuals? Is the motive desire for one's own pleasure, or desire for the pleasure of the community as a whole? Here Bentham plays fast and loose with language in a way that makes all clear thinking on the question impossible.

(*a*) Both private ethics and legislation have the same end in view, the happiness of every member of the community. Now there is here a manifest ambiguity. If each man seeks his own good, no doubt we may say that the good of every member of the community is made the end. But it is the good of each *separately* that is sought. The legislator, on the other hand, does not seek the good of any one man, or set of men, but the good of all men; and this good may involve the taking pleasure from some that others may have more.

(*b*) To say that the motive of each man is desire for his own pleasure is certainly to say that every member of the community acts out of regard for pleasure. But the legislator is not seeking the good of men individually but collectively. How, then, is he to act upon individuals so as to make them choose the good of all? Bentham admits that he can only do so by convincing each man that his own good is bound up with the good of others; in other words, the motive to action of the individual is always a re-

gard for his own pleasure. Clearly, therefore, the distinction of self-regarding and extra-regarding motives is a distinction without a difference. All motives are self-regarding.

(7) This objection is not one that can be got rid of without completely recasting the whole system. When we see that the aim is always the realization of the higher self, we also see that the opposition of self-regarding and other-regarding motives is a false one. A man best realizes himself in seeking the good of others, and he cannot truly seek the good of others without seeking to realize himself. There are not two discrepant sets of motives. From the moral point of view the distinction of self and others is annulled and transcended; and what popular language calls selfishness is seen to be contradictory at once of individual and of common good.

CHAPTER VIII

JOHN STUART MILL

In Bentham we have a man whose ethical theory reflects his own benevolent disposition and practical type of character, but who has little perception of the speculative difficulties attaching to the basis of his theory. John Stuart Mill has none of the limitations of his predecessor. In him the enthusiasm of humanity burns with as steady a flame as in Bentham, but the flame itself is purer, and sheds a clearer and broader light. To the speculative subtlety of Hume he unites the ardour for truth of Spinoza. The ethical doctrine of such a man cannot but reflect his own largeness of nature. But it may also reflect his subtlety and capacity for self-deception. For reasons that can easily be understood Mill to the last held in words to the main principle of hedonism, that the end and motive of action is pleasure, while yet he introduced into his presentation of Utilitarianism

elements that may be shown to be contradictory of it.

1. As to the end of life Mill holds with all hedonists, that it is pleasure. The theory of life on which Utilitarianism is founded is "that pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain." Hence actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. The happiness which is the end of life is not, however, "the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether." So far Mill agrees with Bentham, but he diverges in one most important particular when he denies that the only distinction between pleasures is one of quantity. This was a fundamental point in the doctrine of the earlier thinker, and hence an attempt was made by him to show that the goodness of an act can be, and as a matter of fact is, determined by adding together intensity, duration, and other quantitative differences of anticipated pleasures and pains, and striking a balance between them.

This method of estimating the value of pleasure is virtually abandoned by Mill, and for it

he substitutes the comparison of pleasures and pains by their differences of *quality*, or, at least, he retains the quantitative method only as a means of arranging pleasures of the same kind in a graduated scale of desirability. In many minds the hedonistic theory of life, as he says, produces inveterate dislike. "To suppose that life has (as they express it) no higher end than pleasure, they designate as utterly mean and grovelling; as a doctrine worthy only of swine, to whom the followers of Epicurus were, at a very early period, contemptuously likened." But this charge supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable. The comparison of the Epicurean life with that of beasts is felt as degrading, precisely because a beast's pleasures do not satisfy a human being's conception of happiness.

There is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quan-

tity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone. No doubt the same pleasure is very differently estimated by different persons, but the superiority of one pleasure over another must be determined by the judgment of those who have had experience of both. Mill goes so far as to say that there are pleasures so intrinsically superior that they outweigh "any quantity of the other pleasure." This is true of all the pleasures connected with the higher faculties. "No intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish or base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal, is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs." The "sense of dignity" prevents every human being from being willing to "sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence." "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied, better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

The ultimate end, then, is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality. If it is objected that this end is unattainable, the answer is that by happiness is not meant a "life of rapture," but "moments of such in an

existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures." Such a life all might attain under a proper condition of society. "Unquestionably it is possible to do without happiness: it often has to be done voluntarily by the hero or the martyr, for the sake of something which he prizes more than his individual happiness. But this something, what is it, unless the happiness of others, or some of the requisites of happiness? Self-sacrifice must be for some end; it is not its own end; and if we are told that its end is not happiness but virtue, which is better than happiness, I ask, would the sacrifice be made if the hero or martyr did not believe that it would earn for others immunity from similar sacrifices?" Utilitarian morality "only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted."

2. As the greatest happiness is the end, an action to be good must tend to promote that end. But, like Bentham, Mill holds that it is not necessary that the individual should in all cases be moved to act solely by regard for the general interests of society. "The motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action. He who saves a fellow-creature from drowning does what is morally right, whether his motive be duty, or the hope of

being paid for his trouble." To this it was objected, that in that case a tyrant, who saved a man from drowning with the motive of inflicting upon him more exquisite torture, would be doing a morally right action. Mill's answer is, that the act in this case is done not merely with a different motive from duty or benevolence, but from a different *intention*, and that it is this difference of intention which gives to the act its moral character. What is really intended is to put the man to torture, and saving him from drowning is merely "the necessary first step of an act far more atrocious than leaving him to drown would have been." "The morality of the action depends entirely upon the intention—that is, upon what the agent *wills* to *do*. But the motive, that is, the feeling which makes him will so to do, when it makes no difference in the act, makes none in the morality: though it makes a great difference in our moral estimation of the agent, especially if it indicates a good or bad habitual *disposition*—a bent of character from which useful, or from which hurtful actions are likely to arise." An act, then, is morally good when the agent intends to do it, and when it tends to produce as its consequences more pleasure than pain to the community. If I do not intend or will an act it is not mine, but, granting the act to be mine, its goodness depends entirely upon its effects in pro-

moting the general good. The disposition, again, is judged to be good if we have reason to suppose that it will lead to the willing of acts that will produce an excess of pleasure on the whole.

3. What are the motives to promote the general happiness? These are either external or internal.

(*a*) The external sanctions are "the hope of favour and the fear of displeasure from our fellow-creatures, or from the Ruler of the Universe, along with whatever we may have of sympathy or affection for them, or of love and awe of Him, inclining us to do His will independently of selfish consequences."

(*b*) The internal sanction is "a feeling in our own mind, a pain, more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty." This feeling is not innate but acquired. The desire to be in unity with our fellow-men is a "powerful natural sentiment," and tends to become stronger with advancing civilization. But "society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally." Hence people grow up unable to conceive as possible to them a state of total disregard of other people's interests. And even if a man has none of this sentiment himself, he is as greatly interested as any one else that others should have it. Consequently, the smallest germs of the feeling are laid hold of and

nourished by the contagion of sympathy and the influences of education.

4. But it may still be objected that, while it has been shown that there are powerful motives to seek the common good, it has not been shown that men ought to seek it. "The Utilitarian doctrine is, that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end." What is the proof of this doctrine? "The sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require that happiness is a good; that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons."

But it may be said that this proof fails to show that people never desire anything but happiness. "They desire, for example, virtue, and the absence of vice no less really than pleasure and the absence of pain." If then there are "other ends of human action besides happiness, how can happiness be proved to be the sole criterion?"

Mill admits that "to the individual" virtue may be a "good in itself." But he holds that virtue, although it is not "naturally and originally part of the end," has become so "in those who love it disinterestedly," and is desired and cherished, not as a means to happiness, but as a part of happiness. What was originally a means may "by association with what it is a means to, come to be desired for itself." Thus money is in many cases desired in and for itself. "From being a means to happiness, it has come to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness." Virtue is a good of the same description. "There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired with as great intensity as any other good." In reality nothing is desired except happiness. "Those who desire virtue for its own sake, desire it either because the consciousness of it is a pleasure, or because the consciousness of being without it is a pain, or for both reasons united."

5. One other question remains, the connection between Justice and Utility.

(*a*) What do we mean by justice? What is the distinctive quality which causes us to speak of an action as just or unjust? In the first place, it is

considered unjust to "deprive any one of his personal liberty, his property, or any other thing which belongs to him by law." A just act is here one which respects *legal rights*. But sometimes law does not recognize the rights which individuals may claim on reasonable grounds; and hence, secondly, justice consists in assigning to persons those things to which they have a *moral right*. Thirdly, it is considered just that each person should obtain his *deserts*. Speaking in a general way, a person is understood to deserve good if he does right, evil if he does wrong. Fourthly, it is unjust to *break faith* with any one. Fifthly, it is inconsistent with justice to be *partial*; to show favour or preference to one person over another, in matters to which favour and preference do not properly apply. Lastly, the idea of *equality* in some sense is implied in justice, although in practice it comes to mean rather equal protection to the rights which exist than their equal distribution among all members of the community. Even in slave countries the rights of the slave have been theoretically respected, although those rights could hardly be said to exist. What is common to these various ideas is that justice implies something which it is not only right to do, and wrong not to do, but which some individual person can claim from us as his moral right. No one has a moral right to our generosity or benefi-

cence, because we are not morally bound to practice these virtues towards any given individual.

(*b*) How then are we to account for the *sentiment* of justice, for the feeling which accompanies the idea? The two essential ingredients in the sentiment of justice are the desire to punish a person who has done harm, and the belief that there is some definite individual to whom harm has been done. The desire to punish a person who has done harm is the spontaneous outgrowth of two natural feelings, the animal impulse of self-defence, and the feeling of sympathy. It is natural to resent, and to repel or retaliate, any harm done or attempted against ourselves, or against those with whom we sympathize. This sentiment is found among all animals, for every animal tries to hurt those who have hurt itself or its young. Human beings differ from other animals in two particulars, first, in being capable of sympathizing with all human, and even with all sentient, beings; secondly, in having a more developed intelligence, in virtue of which a human being is capable of apprehending a community of interest between himself and others. The desire to punish is thus the natural feeling of retaliation, rendered by intellect and sympathy applicable to those injuries which wound us through society. In itself this sentiment is not moral, but it becomes moral when it allies

itself with the social sympathies. The natural feeling makes us resent indiscriminately whatever any one does that is disagreeable to us; when moralized by the social feeling it resents what is hurtful to society, although it may not otherwise be a hurt to ourselves, and it does not resent a hurt to ourselves, however painful, if it is not of the kind which society has a common interest in repressing. The sentiment of justice, then, derives its peculiar energy of self-assertion from the animal desire to repel or retaliate a hurt; but its morality is due to enlarged sympathy and intelligent self-interest.

(*c*) This explains how as a matter of fact we do approve of just acts, and reprobate unjust acts. But why ought justice to be practised? What gives it its binding force? The only reason is because the observance of rules of justice is most conducive to the public good. But no form of utility is so important. The interest involved in the protection of rights is that of *security*, to every one's feelings the most vital of all interests. Nearly all other earthly benefits we can forego, if necessary; but on security we depend for all our immunity from evil, and for the whole value of all and every good. Nothing but the gratification of the instant would be of any worth to us, if we could be deprived of everything the next instant by whoever was

momentarily stronger than ourselves. The intense feeling which gathers round the idea of justice causes it to appear different in kind from those concerned in the more common cases of utility. The moral obligation to respect the rights of others is thus in the last resort reducible to utility. In no other way can the same amount of pleasure be secured, while every violation of justice strikes at the very life of society itself, and threatens the destruction of the indispensable condition of all happiness.

Even from this hurried and imperfect summary of Mill's book on *Utilitarianism*, it must be evident that the conception of life which it embodies is of the highest and noblest character. We have travelled a long way from the animal absorption in the moment recommended by Aristippus, from the refined selfishness of Epicurus, and from the low conception of human nature of Hobbes. In its practical application the hedonism of Mill, as he says himself, does not differ from the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth "to love one's neighbour as one's self." But an ethical doctrine must be tried, not simply by the principle which it assumes, but by the principle which it formulates. The philosopher and the preacher must submit to a different test. The perfection of a speculative doctrine lies in the success with which it expresses in the articulate

language of reflection that which is implied in the common consciousness of men. It is by this standard, therefore, that Mill's utilitarian theory of conduct must be judged, and I think it may be shown, as in the case of Bentham, that only by removing its hedonistic foundation, and reinterpreting it from the point of view of an ideal system of ethics, can the higher aspects of Mill's ethical doctrine be consistently retained.

(1) Mill denies that the only difference in pleasures are those of *quantity*; the more important distinction is *quality*. This divergence from the earlier form of the theory is a virtual abandonment of its hedonistic basis. We have seen that no guide to action can be extracted from the purely quantitative balancing of pleasures and pains, because each pleasure and pain is what it seems to the individual at the time, and the individual is continually changing in his mood. At the same time Bentham was right in saying that a pleasure or pain taken by itself differs from another only in quantity. Mill assigns to "the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation." But "as pleasures" they cannot have a "higher value."

The source of a pleasure does not enter as an ingredient into the pleasure itself. Pleasure is

pleasure whether its source is in the palate or the intellect, the ear or the conscience. If it is really pleasure that is desired, and not the cultivation of the intellect, the development of the taste, or progress in morality, there can be no distinction in quality between pleasures connected with different modes of activity. Assuming pleasure to be the object aimed at, it cannot make any real difference that one pleasure is obtained through the channel of the intellect, another through the imagination, and a third by means of the moral sense.

When the question arises as to which of two pleasures is more desirable, the difference must be sought in the greater intensity, or duration, or productiveness of the one as compared with the other. Mill in rejecting this criterion practically admits that not pleasure as such, but the development of all the faculties of man in due subordination to one another, is the true end of life. To say that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied" is to say that, human nature being infinitely higher than pig nature, the man who makes pleasure his end is ignoring the necessity that is laid upon him to strive after the standard of perfection of which his nobler nature is capable. And the same principle holds good when we compare different men with each other. The man who prefers the pleasures of sense to the pleasures of intel-

lect or imagination does not violate the rule, "Seek greatest pleasure"; what he violates is the command, "Seek that which is noblest."

(2) As Mill cannot consistently classify pleasures as lower or higher, but only as more or less intense, enduring or productive, he is not entitled to say that the end of action is the common good. The common good, as described by Mill, is identical with the complete development of the powers of all members of the community. This noble ideal of life is too weighty to be borne by the frail substructure of pleasure. "Good" for the consistent hedonist must mean the experience by the sum of beings of the greatest pleasure of which they are capable. But this end will be equally subserved whether the pleasures are low or high, provided that an equal quantity of enjoyment is obtained. If it is said that equal enjoyment cannot be obtained from the pleasures of sense as from the pleasures of intellect, or imagination, or virtue, we answer that this defence rests upon the assumption that pleasures may differ in kind, and that assumption carries with it the denial of pure hedonism, and the substitution of an ideal humanity as the end.

(3) The "proof" of Utilitarianism on which Mill relies is unsatisfactory. "No reason can be given," he says, "why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it

to be attainable, desires his own happiness." What has to be proved by the utilitarian is that every man ought to seek for his own happiness by aiming at the happiness of all. The "general happiness" is "desirable" in the sense that *it ought to be desired.* This is what Mill has to prove. How does he prove it? He says that every one "desires his own happiness." That is to say, as a *matter of fact* every one desires his own happiness. The implied inference is that, as a man is aware that he is seeking his own happiness, he must grant it to be reasonable for others to seek their happiness, and hence he must admit that the end of society is to secure the happiness of all its members. As Mr. Sidgwick puts it, "The fact that 'I am I' cannot make my happiness intrinsically more desirable than the happiness of any other person." Now here we have the same sort of equivocation as we have found to be implied in Mill's distinction of pleasures on the ground of their quality, and in the double sense which he attaches to such terms as "common good" and "general happiness." It is certainly unreasonable to seek for "our being's end and aim" apart from the good of others, because the highest form of self-realization cannot be found in that way. Individual good is identical with universal good. The fact that every one from his very nature is striving after completeness of being

is a valid reason for the exclusion of self-seeking. As the end which is desired is proved to be unattainable in that way, it is a reasonable demand that it should be sought in the only way in which it can possibly be found. But if the desire for one's own happiness means only the desire for a surplus of agreeable feeling, how can we logically pass to the conclusion that we ought to promote not a surplus of such feeling in ourselves, but in the community as a whole? Granted that I desire my own greatest pleasure, that is no reason why I ought to desire the greatest pleasure of other people, unless my own pleasure is bound up with theirs. Let us assume it to be admitted that this is the case; then our conclusion must be this, that we ought to desire the pleasure of others because only in that way can we secure our own pleasure. This consideration may have force as a rule of prudence or self-interest, but it carries with it no obligation to practise rules of virtue.

When, therefore, any one objects that he prefers his own pleasure to the pleasure of others, I do not see how he is to be convinced of the error of his ways by those who begin by admitting the reasonableness of seeking for one's own pleasure. To every appeal in favour of making the pleasure of the greatest number his aim he may give the unanswerable retort, "Let others make their own

pleasure a means to the pleasure of all; as for me I prefer to make others a means to my pleasure." It is no answer to say, "But you cannot get pleasure in that way," because the man may reply, "I do not see how you can tell that; you get your pleasure in benevolence, I get mine in selfishness; we are both satisfied, and nothing more need be said." The real force, then, of Mill's "proof" of utilitarianism is in its tacit assumption that the end and standard of action is not pleasure but the perfect realization of a man's nature, as possible only in and through the identification of his personal good with the universal good.

(4) Mill's account of the sentiment of justice, and of our obligation to obey rules of justice, differs very little from the similar account of Hume. The feeling of approbation at the doing of a just act has its source in the natural impulse to retaliate a hurt, and the social instinct as broadened and widened by the growth of sympathy. It may be pointed out that the instinct of retaliation and the social instinct cannot be a desire for pleasure, but must precede the pleasure of which they are the cause. But, waiving this objection, it is plain that Mill's account of the sentiment of justice presupposes the idea of human perfection as the moving force in its evolution. Why is it that as time goes on there is a gradual widening of sympathy so as at

last to include all men in its comprehensive embrace, if not that man learns by the development of his nature that nothing short of complete union with the universal good can bring satisfaction? The animal instinct of retaliation does not simply take a new direction, but its very nature is changed and transformed as there dawns upon the conscience of man the worthier end of public well-being. In itself that instinct subserves the existence of the being endowed with it, but the meaning of the instinct is apprehended when, on the rise of self-consciousness, existence is seen to be valuable only as a means to the higher end of perfect existence. It is this consciousness of the meaning of his individual life that leads a man to rise above the immediate desire to revenge a hurt. Justice as the means of securing to each what is necessary to the development of his nature is thus different in kind from the instinct of retaliation. The extension of sympathy to all men is more than a mere extension, because the recognition of the claims of all men to respect involves the apprehension of the end of life as the union of all men in a common brotherhood, and therefore the elevation of every man to the perfection of an ideal humanity. The justification of all forms of rights is in fact their tendency to minister to the spiritual nature. The true defence of justice is therefore not advanced

by Mill when he reduces it to the promotion of more pleasure than pain, unless by pleasure we understand what Mill is only too ready to identify with it, viz., complete perfection of nature; and the laws and customs of a nation coincide with justice just in so far as they coincide with the ideal of perfection.

CHAPTER IX

HERBERT SPENCER

LIKE Bentham and Mill Mr. Herbert Spencer holds that the ultimate end of life is the production of the greatest pleasure to all, but he differs from them in connecting hedonism with the doctrine of evolution. All previous moralists he accuses of being "unscientific," and he seeks to construct a system of ethics which shall recognize throughout that actions are good or bad purely as it is their intrinsic nature to produce good or bad consequences in the way of preserving living beings in the fulness of their activities. To understand "scientifically" what conduct results in the most complete life we must take a survey of all forms of life, from the simplest to the most complex, in the order of their evolution. Hence Mr. Spencer seeks to deduce the rules of perfect conduct from a consideration of that perfect form of life towards which evolution tends. Now, human

conduct is but one form in which the universal law of all existence manifests itself. All existence is a unity, and is pervaded by a single principle. That principle is that the changes through which the world passes are from the indefinite to the definite, the incoherent to the coherent, the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. The forms of being which we find around us have not been created as they are, but have developed from a much simpler condition. Our earth itself, along with the other bodies which form the solar system, was originally part of an attenuated nebulous matter, almost homogeneous in density, temperature, and other properties. How heterogeneous it now is! Igneous rocks, metallic veins, mountains, continents and seas, differences of climate, combine to form a whole so complex as to defy complete description. The same development from simplicity to complexity is shown in animal life. Speaking generally, the most complex organisms are also the latest, and have been evolved from the earlier and less complex. So man, who even in his least developed state, displays in his organism more differentiation than any other animal, himself exhibits in his development the same law. The various races of men exhibit greater complexity of physical structure according to the stage of development which they have reached. And what is

true of the bodily life also holds good of the social life. In primitive society there is little or no division of labour: every man is a warrior, a hunter, a fisher, and a workman. Contrast with this the minute subdivision of labour that is found in modern industrial society, and the law of evolution will be seen to apply here also.

The whole of existence is thus governed by a single law. In particular, we must cease to separate between mental and bodily life, or between animal and human life. No line can be drawn between them that is otherwise than arbitrary. "It is not more certain that, from the simple reflection by which the infant sucks, up to the elaborate reasonings of the adult man, the progress is by daily infinitesimal steps, than it is certain that between the automatic actions of the lowest creatures, and the highest conscious actions of the human race, a series of actions displayed by the various tribes of the animal kingdom may be so placed as to render it impossible to say of any one step in the series,—Here intelligence begins." Mr. Spencer's method, then, will consist in tracing the process by which conduct is gradually evolved, and in seeking to extract from this survey "scientific" rules of conduct. It must be added, that with the results of this method Mr. Spencer tries to connect the hedonistic theory

which finds in pleasure the ultimate end of conduct. How this is attempted we shall afterwards see. In the present chapter I propose to give a statement only of the evolutionist part of Mr. Spencer's doctrine.

(1) To determine the goal towards which all things tend we must ask what has as a matter of fact occurred. Or rather, since in ethics the problem is in regard to the ultimate form which conduct may be expected to assume when the process of evolution is complete, we may limit our inquiry to the nature and tendency of conduct. It is true that ethics does not directly deal with all conduct, but only with a part of it; but it is impossible to understand the part without understanding the whole. Just as an arm or a leg cannot be known for what it is, by one who has no knowledge of its relation to the other parts of the body, so that part of conduct with which ethics deals can only be apprehended as it truly is by viewing it in relation to the remainder of conduct.

(*a*) What, then, is to be included under conduct in general? We must not include such purposeless actions as those of an epileptic in a fit; but we must include all purposive actions,—all acts which are adjusted to ends. "Conduct in its full acceptation must be taken as comprehending all adjust-

ments of acts to ends, from the simplest to the most complex." But moral conduct, the conduct which we pronounce to be right or wrong, is much less extensive than conduct in general. For there are many acts which have no moral character. It is morally indifferent whether I walk to the water-fall or ramble along the sea-shore; whether, if I decide to go to the water-fall, I go over the moor or take the path through the wood. But "the transition from indifferent acts to acts which are good or bad is gradual." Thus the direction of my walk, which in ordinary cases is of no ethical importance, becomes important when, by taking a longer route, I fail to keep an appointment. To have a complete comprehension of moral conduct we must therefore view it as coming by insensible degrees out of conduct which is not moral. And not only so, but to form a truly scientific conception of conduct we must examine the conduct, not only of human beings, but of all living creatures. The actions of man differ from the actions of the lower animals only in their relative complexity; but all actions, animal as well as human, imply the adjustment of acts to ends. To understand the complex we must first understand the simple; in other words, we must look upon human conduct as a part of that larger whole which comprehends the conduct of all living beings,

and we must seek to interpret the former by tracing the process by which it has been gradually evolved from the very simple conduct of the lowest forms of being.

(*b*) Purposeless actions, as we have seen, are not conduct, but only those actions which are adjusted to ends. But, just as actions which are morally indifferent pass by degrees into actions which are good or bad, so purposeless actions merge insensibly in purposive actions. An infusorium swims about at random, and apparently by chance it finds the food which prolongs its life. Here there is hardly any adjustment of acts to ends, and the conduct may be called on the whole purposeless. The rotifer again, although it is a very low form of living being, does display palpable adjustments of acts to ends: sucking in food by its whirling cilia, fixing itself by its prehensile tail to some fit object, and in other ways adapting itself to its environment, and so preserving itself for a longer period than the infusorium. We find the same law pervading the whole of the lower animals; always there is a greater complexity of adjustments to ends, the result of which is greater prolongation of the life of the creature. And when we pass from the animals to man, "we not only find that the adjustments of acts to ends are both more numerous and better than among lower

animals; but we find the same thing on comparing the doings of higher races of men with those of lower races." Food is obtained more regularly, in greater variety, and better prepared; clothing is much better adapted to give warmth in all the variations of temperature from day to day, and from hour to hour; and how great is the contrast between the shelter of boughs and grass which the lowest savage builds, and the mansion of the civilized man. So the ordinary activities of the civilized man are much more varied and complex than those of the savage. And "along with this greater elaboration of life produced by the pursuit of more numerous ends, there goes that increased duration of life which constitutes the supreme end." But it must also be observed that the increase in complexity implied in improved adjustments of acts to ends, not only tends to increase the *length* of life, but also to add to its *breadth.* The life of the civilized man is not only longer than that of the savage, but it is infinitely fuller and richer.

So far we have spoken only of preservation of life, and increase in the complexity of life; but we must now note, that as conduct evolves, and there is a greater adjustment of acts to ends, the preservation and development of the species is better secured. In the lowest forms of living being there is no conduct which can, strictly

speaking, be said to conduce to the preservation of the species. "Protozoa spontaneously divide and subdivide, in consequence of physical changes over which they have no control." Here there is no conduct, because no purpose. But as we ascend in the scale of animal life, we find greater and greater complexity in the adjustment of acts to ends. Birds build nests, sit on the eggs, feed their broods for considerable periods, and give them aid after they can fly. Thus the conduct which furthers race-maintenance evolves hand in hand with the conduct which furthers self-maintenance. In man the development is still more marked. "A larger number of the wants of offspring are provided for; and parental care, enduring longer, extends to the disciplining of offspring in arts and habits which fit them for their conditions of existence." And, as we ascend from savage to civilized man, we find conduct of this order, equally with conduct of the first order, becoming evolved in a still greater degree. "The adjustments of acts to ends in the rearing of children become far more elaborate, alike in number of ends met, variety of means used, and efficiency of their adaptations; and the aid and oversight are continued throughout a much greater part of life." Speaking generally, then, the evolution of conduct is such that it tends to the simul-

taneous preservation of the individual and the species.

But conduct cannot be perfectly evolved until the adjustments are such as may be made by all creatures without interference of one creature with another. In the case of man this implies permanently peaceful societies. In the savage state, individual life is prematurely cut short, the fostering of offspring is incomplete even when it does not fail, and the individual and the species are preserved by the destruction of other beings. Finally, in the most evolved form of conduct the members of a society give mutual help in the achievement of ends, either indirectly by industrial co-operation, or directly by volunteered aid. From this survey of conduct we learn that ethics "has for its subject-matter that form which universal conduct assumes during the last stages of its evolution."

(2) The conclusion, so far, is that the best conduct is the most evolved, *i.e.* is best adapted to the end of securing completeness of life to each and all. Now, the most evolved conduct is that which is manifested by human beings dwelling together in society; and hence a description of the most perfect form of society ought to enable us to see what are the forms assumed by completely evolved or perfect conduct. The rules of this ultimate form of society will be absolutely true rules, and hence

ethics as laying down those rules may be called absolute ethics. The conduct with which morality is concerned conforms to the laws of evolution, *i.e.* to those fundamental truths which are common to the special sciences—physical, biological, psychological, and sociological. What are the data furnished by each of these sciences?

(*a*) From the *physical* point of view conduct is made up of external movements of the body and limbs, the facial muscles, and the vocal apparatus.

Concentrating our attention on these movements we find that (*a*) they are more *coherent* the higher the form of being. "The random movements which an animalcule makes have severally no reference to movements made a moment before." Birds, again, "show us in the building of nests, the sitting on eggs, the rearing of chicks, and the aiding of them after they fly, sets of motions which form a dependent series." But it is in man that we find the most coherent combination of motions. And of human conduct, that is the most coherent which we call moral. A man of high principles acts in fixed ways: he pays the money he owes, he keeps his appointments to a minute, he tells the truth. Thus his life is made up of a coherent system of movements.

(*β*) In moral conduct there is also a *definite* co-ordination of movements. "The conscientious man

is exact in all his transactions. He supplies a precise weight for a specified sum, he gives a definite quality in fulfilment of understanding, he pays the full amount he bargained for." His statements correspond accurately to the facts. He observes the terms of the marriage contract, and, as a father, he adapts his behaviour carefully to the nature of each child.

(γ) Moral conduct is more *varied* or *heterogeneous* than immoral conduct. The better a man fulfils every requirement of life the more varied do his activities become. In the matter of social obligations, for example, the man who is helpful to inferiors, who takes part in politics, and who aids in diffusing knowledge, differs in the complexity of his movements from the man who is a slave to one desire or group of desires.

(δ) The evolution of conduct is towards *equilibrium*, or the perfect harmony of internal and external relations. Men who lead an immoral life continually interrupt this harmony by excesses which tend to shorten life, whereas "one in whom the internal rhythms are best maintained, is one by whom the external actions required to fulfil all needs and duties, severally performed on the recurring occasions, conduce to a moving equilibrium that is at once involved and prolonged." This perfect harmony of the individual and his environment is

only possible in a perfect society. Progress in morality, therefore, consists in a continual advance towards that condition of society in which there is perfect coherence, definiteness, and variety of movements, and, as a consequence, perfect harmony of the individual with his environment.

(*b*) Expressed in terms of *biology*, this means that the moral man is one in whom the functions of all kinds are duly fulfilled. It is immoral so to treat the body as in any way to diminish the fulness or vigour of its vitality. Hence, one test of actions is, Does the action tend to maintenance of complete life for the time being? and does it tend to prolongation of life to its full extent? To answer Yes or No to either of these questions, is implicitly to class the action as right or wrong in respect of its immediate bearings, whatever it may be in respect of its remote bearings. This conclusion, however, refers only to "that highest conduct in which evolution terminates." Further, a feeling of pleasure to a certain extent even now, and absolutely in an ideal state of society, accompanies the healthy discharge of each and every function, while a feeling of pain indicates, or, at least, will indicate, that the function is not sufficiently exercised, or is exercised in excess.

(*c*) In his *psychological* view of moral conduct Mr Spencer gives us his analysis of the conscious-

ness of the agent, and traces the growth of social institutions and of the sentiment of moral obligation. What is the mental process by which the adjustment of acts to ends is effected? There is (α) the rise of a feeling constituting the motive, and (β) the thought through which the motive is shaped and finally issues in action. Now, just as moral conduct consists in the perfect adjustment of acts to ends, so the state of mind of the moral man is distinguished from the state of mind of the immoral man by its complexity; in other words, the motive and the thought which gives form to the motive are very remote from the simple presentations of the senses. Thus a conscientious man is restrained from taking his neighbour's property by the thought of the claims of the person owning the property, and of the pains which loss of it will entail on him, joined with that general aversion to acts injurious to others, which arises from the inherited effects of experience. Hence, as guides, the feelings have authorities proportionate to the degrees in which they are removed by their complexity and their ideality from simple sensations and appetites. So, with the development of intelligence, the ends to which acts are adjusted cease to be exclusively immediate. Present ends become increasingly subordinate to future ends.

Now, the restraints properly distinguished as

moral are those which concern the intrinsic effects of actions. "The truly moral deterrent from murder is not constituted by a representation of hanging as its consequence, or by a representation of the horror and hatred excited in fellow-men, but by a representation of the necessary natural results, the infliction of death agony on the victim, the destruction of all his possibilities of happiness, the entailed sufferings to his belongings." At the same time the feeling of moral obligation has been gradually evolved. As man passes into the social state, to the restraints constituted by the idea of the intrinsic effects of actions, there are added the external sanctions in the shape of political, religious, and social penalties. With the evolution of society men come to see that acts proscribed by authority have in themselves bad consequences, and so there grow up moral aversions and approvals. Thus the notion of *obligation* has come to be associated with acts, the intrinsic consequence of which is the true motive to do them. This sense of obligation will disappear entirely when the individual mind is completely accommodated to the social environment. The higher actions required for the harmonious carrying on of life will be as much matters of course as are those lower actions which are prompted by the simple desires. " If some action to which the special motive is insufficient is performed in obedience to the feeling

of moral obligation, the fact proves that the special faculty concerned is not yet equal to its function, has not acquired such strength that the required activity has become its normal activity, yielding its due amount of pleasure. With complete evolution, then, the sense of obligation, not ordinarily present in consciousness, will be awakened only on those extraordinary occasions that prompt breach of the laws otherwise spontaneously conformed to."

(*d*) From the *sociological* point of view, ethics is "an account of the forms of conduct that are fitted to the associated state in such wise that the lives of each and all may be the greatest possible, alike in length and breadth." At the outset the preservation of the individual is not harmonious with the preservation of society. But as fast as the social state establishes itself, the preservation of society is a means to the preservation of its units. Hence social preservation comes to be set above individual preservation. But this is only a transitory state of things and is necessitated merely by the presence of antagonistic societies. The ultimate end is the furtherance of individual lives, and when the existence of the society is no longer in danger, the welfare of the units, no longer needing to be postponed, becomes the immediate object of pursuit. At present the individual man is sometimes called upon to be regardless of the

lives of those belonging to other societies than his own. Hence the incongruous rules by which he governs his life. "Hate and destroy your fellow-man is now the command; and then the command is, Love and aid your fellow-man." So also the sentiments corresponding to the militant and the industrial forms of society are contradictory; the former taking the shape of the feeling of loyalty, the latter of antagonism to external authority. "The leading traits of a code under which complete living through voluntary co-operation is secured, may be simply stated. The fundamental requirement is that the life-sustaining actions of each shall severally bring him the amounts and kinds of advantage naturally achieved by them; and this implies, firstly, that he shall suffer no direct aggression in his person or property, and secondly, that he shall suffer no indirect aggression by breach of contract. Observance of these negative conditions to voluntary co-operation having facilitated life to the greatest extent by exchange of services under agreement, life is to be further facilitated by exchange of services beyond agreement: the highest life being reached only when, besides helping to complete one another's lives by specified reciprocities of aid, men otherwise help to complete one another's lives." The sociological view, in other words, enables us to deduce the reasons for fulfilling contracts,

and assigning benefits in proportion to services, which is justice; and, further, for the rendering of gratuitous services, which is beneficence.

(3) From the whole course of his argument it is manifest that the rules which Mr. Spencer seeks to place on a "scientific" basis are the rules which apply to conduct in the ideal state of society. Accordingly, we are told that absolute ethics lays down the rules that "formulate normal conduct in an ideal society." Absolutely good conduct is perfectly pleasurable, and, where there is any concomitant of pain, the conduct can only be called relatively right. In the transition towards the ideal form of society, the acts of men are in most cases not absolutely right, but only least wrong. Let us take as an example of absolutely right conduct the relation of a healthy mother to a healthy infant —one of the best examples, because the harmony arose before social evolution began. Here the mother receives gratification, while the child, in satisfying his appetite, is at the same time furthering his own life, growth, and increasing enjoyment. The act as absolutely pleasurable is absolutely right. It is difficult to find instances in the intercourse of adults. But there are cases in which the energies are so abundant that pleasure is the concomitant of work. When such services are paid for by a man of like nature, the relation is pleasur-

able on both sides. Now, as the evolution of society is towards the industrial as distinguished from the militant form of society, we are entitled to expect that ultimately men's activities at large will assume this character. Even at present the artist of genius—poet, painter, or musician—is one who obtains the means of living by acts that are directly pleasurable to him, while they yield, immediately or remotely, pleasures to others. Again, there are certain benevolent acts which, as yielding pure pleasure to the doer and receiver, are absolutely good. Now, by eliminating perturbing or conflicting factors we may form an ideal of conduct which, as absolutely pleasure-giving, is absolutely right. Having reached this system of ideal ethical truths, we shall then have a standard which "will be applicable to the questions of our transitional state in such ways that, allowing for the friction of an incomplete life and the imperfection of existing natures, we may ascertain with approximate correctness what is the relatively right." "An ideal social being may be conceived as so constituted that his spontaneous activities are congruous with the conditions imposed by the social environment formed by other such beings." Now, man has been "changing in the direction of such an ideal congruity." Hence "the ultimate man is one in whom the process has gone so far as to produce a correspondence

between all the promptings of his nature and all the requirements of his life as carried on in society." Absolute ethics, then, "formulates the behaviour of the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society." There are two main divisions of ethics, personal and social.

(*a*) There is a class of actions directed to personal ends which are to be judged in their relations to personal well-being, considered apart from the well-being of others. These must be classed as intrinsically right or wrong according to their beneficial or detrimental effects on the agent himself. A code of perfect individual well-being can never be made definite. But certain general requirements must be fulfilled. By connecting conduct with physical necessities a partially scientific authority may be given to ethical requirements. Absolute ethics has to point out that conduct is good which preserves the due relation between expenditure of energy and the repair of waste by proper sustenance; between activity and rest; between the rate of mortality and the rate of increase of individuals: hence the practical rule, to consider what kind of conduct will fulfil these ends as well as may be.

(*b*) The second division of ethics is that which deals with the effects of one's conduct on others. (*a*) The first set of regulations are those of justice. Here we have not only to define the equitable

relations among perfect individuals, but to determine the relations between each man and the aggregate of men. Hence the limits of state interference must be pointed out. (β) Beneficence has two subdivisions, the negative and the positive. In an ideal society the former has only a nominal existence, for as no one will have feelings which prompt acts that disagreeably affect others, there can exist no code of restraints. But absolute ethics is of value in enforcing the consideration that inflicting more pain than is necessitated by proper self-regard, or by desire for another's benefit, is unwarranted. As to positive beneficence, "the desire for it by every one will so increase, and the sphere for exercise of it so decrease," that there will be as much competition in rendering services as there is at present in exacting them. The difficulty will in fact be to find scope for the altruistic cravings. This will be found chiefly in (1) family life, in which the care of children by parents and of parents by children will be better fulfilled, and (2) in the improvements of the social state.

CHAPTER X

HERBERT SPENCER (CONTINUED)

IN the last chapter I gave an outline of Mr. Spencer's ethical theory in its evolutionist as distinguished from its hedonistic aspect. I now propose to consider how far the theory can be accepted. Before we enter upon an express examination of Mr. Spencer's doctrine, a word may be said upon the idea of evolution to which it appeals.

The theory of Evolution or Development is associated in the popular mind with the theory first clearly propounded by Darwin, that all the living beings that have existed, or do exist, have come by way of natural descent from one or more primordial forms. What had previously been regarded as distinct species, having no connection with one another in the way of origin, Darwin maintained are really varieties of a single species; or, rather, the distinction of species is simply one

of classification, not of origin. The theory is not that one species changed into another species, but that the differences between what we call distinct species have been gradually produced by minute changes accumulating upon one another during vast periods of time. Just as the skilful gardener can produce new varieties of a flower by taking advantage of any peculiarity which presents itself, so any differences in a living being which were favourable to its preservation were naturally transmitted to its descendants, and thus in course of ages arose all the varieties of life which have appeared on our earth. This theory, it will be observed, relates only to vegetable and animal life, and it only gives us an account of the manner in which the different species of living beings have as a matter of fact come into existence. It does not tell us how the "one or more primordial forms" of living being came to exist, nor does it show that one species of being is higher or lower than another. Denying that there has been any creation of distinct species, either at the same time or at different times, it does not deny that the original forms from which all the rest have sprung may have been created. Hence, supposing the Darwinian theory of the origin of species accepted, there are still two distinct explanations of the origin of the primitive types of living being; we may say

either (*a*) that they were directly created, or (*b*) that they arose out of non-living things. And, further, granting that all living beings are connected by the chain of natural descent, the Darwinian theory does not tell us whether we are entitled to distinguish different species as higher and lower.

Two questions therefore arise: first, did living things arise from non-living things, in the same way as the different species of organized beings have descended from one or more original forms? Second, are all living beings essentially the same in nature, or are there differences between them which entitle us to speak of them as lower and higher? Now to the first of these questions Mr. Spencer, as we have seen, answers in the affirmative. He denies that there was any special creation of the primary forms of life, and maintains that life appeared on our planet in accordance with ordinary natural laws. So far as the question of natural descent goes, we must therefore hold that just as the infinite variety of living beings have all descended from a few original types, so those types are themselves the natural product of inorganic nature, and may be traced back to the nebulous matter originally diffused through vast stretches of space. With this inclusion of all forms of being, and not simply of living beings, within the process of development, the second

question connected with the idea of development takes a wider and more comprehensive form. We must now ask not merely: are all living beings the same in kind? but, are all things, living and non-living, the same in kind? For, if all the varieties of life that have existed or do exist have come down by natural descent from the atoms which composed the original nebulous vapour, must we not hold that all things are at bottom essentially the same in nature? If so, then a stone, a flower, a dog, and a man, differ not in kind but in degree. On the other hand, it may be said that the difference in nature between the stone and the flower, the dog and the man, is not in any way affected by the fact of their common descent. Just as a man may be more intelligent than his father, and just as in every individual the processes of nutrition and even of sensation precede consciousness, while yet consciousness is higher in kind; so it may be said, living beings may as a matter of fact have originated from non-living things, and man from some lower form of being, while at the same time the living is higher than the non-living, and the rational than the irrational.

The question then is this: Granting the truth of the Darwinian account of the origin of species, and granting even the wider doctrine of evolution

of Mr. Spencer, can we, from a general view of the course of evolution, extract a principle which shall explain at once the changes of inorganic nature, of life, and of consciousness? This question Mr. Spencer tacitly answers in the affirmative. The law of development, applicable alike to the evolution of the solar system, the evolution of animal life, and the evolution of human society, is that the transition is from an "indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity."

Now, it lies upon the surface that such a formula does not allow us to say that there is any fundamental distinction between the different orders of existence which for our own convenience we separate from one another. An animal whose structure is more definite, coherent, and heterogeneous than another is not different in kind from one that is less definite, coherent, and heterogeneous; nor is a society which displays more definiteness, coherence, and heterogeneity, for that reason of a higher type than one which displays these characteristics in a less degree. It may be that the more complex animal or society is higher than the less complex, but to prove this we must be able to show why it is that the more complex is also the higher. I am told, for example, that a dog is a more developed or higher being than

a worm, because it shows in its structure and conduct greater definiteness, coherence, and variety. But when I ask why the dog is held to be more developed I am told that it is because it displays greater power of adaptation to external circumstances. Here the formula of evolution, by being specified, has completely changed its nature. It is not the mere fact of complexity which entitles us to call the dog higher or more developed than the worm, but the fact that, as a living being, it is capable of self-adjustment to the varying circumstances in which it is placed. So when I am told that the most complex society is the most perfect, I answer, Yes, but it is not the complexity which makes it more perfect, but the perfection which makes it more complex. The more perfect the society the greater is the division of labour and the more cultured and intelligent the citizens; but the complexity of a civilized society is the result and not the cause of the perfection. No principle applicable to human life can be extracted from the formula that evolution is from an "indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity." Like all perfectly abstract principles, it may mean anything we choose to make it mean.

1. Mr. Spencer tells us that ethics deals with that part of conduct to which we apply moral judg-

ments, and that, as the part cannot be understood except in relation to the whole, we must view moral conduct as an evolution from non-moral conduct. It is true that not all actions are conduct, but only those which are adjusted to ends; but the difference between moral and non-moral conduct is a difference in relative simplicity and complexity. Here, therefore, the general formula of evolution applies. Moral conduct is more *coherent*, because the moral man acts according to a system and not from caprice; it is more *definite*, because he is exact in all his transactions; it is more *heterogeneous*, because he takes an interest in all that concerns the general well-being; and hence moral conduct tends towards *equilibrium*, or the complete harmony of the individual with his environment.

Now, I think it may easily be shown that the distinction between conduct and the wider sphere of action, and between moral and non-moral conduct, are distinctions which cannot be made without successive changes in the interpretation of the general formula of evolution, and that Mr. Spencer has failed to see the ground of those distinctions, because he has attempted to explain them by means of his purely abstract formula.

(1) If we ask what formula will apply to the changes of all forms of being, from the aggregation of atoms to the formation of human societies, we

must manifestly drop all the differences which distinguish one class of being from another. And when we go on to apply our formula in explanation of different kinds of being, we must take up again the differences which we had let drop. If I am asked, What is common to the fall of a stone and the action of a man? I must answer, Both are movements. But if I am asked, Do you mean that there is no difference in kind between the movement of the stone and the movement of the man? I answer, There certainly is a difference, and a very great difference, but it is not one which applies to them *as movements*. Now, the charge which I have to make against Mr. Spencer is that his formula of evolution applies to the conduct of human beings only in the sense in which we can say that the actions of human beings are movements. Certainly they are movements; but it is not the fact that they are movements which constitutes their essential nature. There can be no conduct without movement, but movement is no adequate characterization of conduct. I cannot think without a brain, but it does not follow that my thought is nothing but a molecular movement of my brain. So there can be no conduct, moral or non-moral, which does not take outwardly the form of movement; but it by no means follows that conduct may be identified with movement.

When, therefore, Mr. Spencer tells us that from the physical point of view human conduct is made up of the movements of the body and limbs, the facial muscles, and the vocal apparatus, we have no objection to make except on the score of irrelevancy and omission. So regarded, such movements, we say, are not conduct at all, because they do not differ from any other movements. Hence the formula of evolution may very well apply to conduct regarded as movements, without helping us in the least to understand the distinction between one kind of conduct and another. Atoms move towards one another, and form aggregates of matter, and men combine with one another in society; but, while there are physical movements in both cases, the one kind of movement is different in kind from the other. It is this difference of nature, whatever it is, that entitles us to separate between the movements of unconscious atoms and the movements of conscious beings.

(2) It may be said, however, that Mr. Spencer recognizes the difference between the movements of dead matter and of living beings, when he says that not all actions, but only those which are adjusted to an end, come under the head of "conduct." And no doubt Mr. Spencer does distinguish between random movements, such as those of an infusorium or of an epileptic in a fit, and purposive

movements. But what I wish to point out is that in drawing this distinction he has so interpreted the general formula as practically to introduce a new law. The coherence, definiteness, and variety of which he now speaks is not that of movements regarded simply as movements, but of functions, *i.e.* of acts adjusted to ends. Now, certainly acts which are adjusted to ends imply movements. If, seeing a man drowning, I leap into the water to rescue him, my leaping into the water, swimming towards the man, and bringing him ashore, are all movements. But they receive their character, not from the fact that they are movements, but that they are movements done with a purpose. It was my *intention* to go through those movements in order to secure the end I had in view, and it is this fact of intention that makes my conduct what it is. The movements of an epileptic in a fit are not intentional, and hence they are rightly excluded by Mr. Spencer from the rank of actions which are conduct. But if we apply the formula in the sense in which it is applicable to the movement of atoms, there is nothing to distinguish purposive conduct from any other class of movements. No doubt, looking at those movements which are done purposely, we may find greater coherence and system in them than those which are not done purposely, but until we shift our point of view from the outer to the inner side of actions,

we can find no difference in kind between them. Mr. Spencer's separation of purposive from non-purposive action is therefore the introduction of a new principle which transcends and includes the old. It is true that purposive conduct is more coherent than non-purposive conduct, but the reason why it is more coherent is that it is purposive.

(3) But we have been going somewhat too fast. Mr. Spencer does speak of conduct as that action which is purposive, but we find when we look more closely that he applies the term conduct not only to that action which is intended to secure an end, but also to action which secures an end without any intention on the part of the agent. In birds, for example, which build nests, rear chicks, and teach them to fly, there is an adjustment of acts to ends, just as in human beings, who provide food and shelter for their children, and give them a physical and moral training. Fixing his attention upon the fact that the lower animals as well as man do acts which tend to the preservation of themselves and their offspring, Mr. Spencer tells us that the transition from the very simple adjustments of lower forms of being to the complex adjustments of civilized society, is made by insensible degrees. The development of conduct, it would seem, consists only in the fact that, as we rise in the scale of animal life, the adjustments become

more definite, coherent, and varied. All minor ends are comprehended in the one end of the preservation of life, or rather of completeness of life, or the development of all the functions of which a living being is capable. Now, it is plain that the formula of evolution has here received a new interpretation. The evolution of the solar system conforms to the formula that evolution is an advance from simple to complex movements. But it does not correspond to the new interpretation of the formula, that the advance consists in the more perfect adjustment of acts to ends. The atoms composing the original nebulous vapour when they aggregated into masses did not display in themselves any adjustment of acts to ends. It is only in organized beings, and, according to Mr. Spencer's account, only in animals of a certain degree of structural complexity, that there is any adjustment of acts to ends. Hence, while it is no doubt true that animals exhibit movements, and that the movements are more and more complex as we trace the successive forms of life, we require, in order to describe the movements of animals, to say that they are movements which secure an end. Thus the movements which are called "conduct" differ in kind from the movements which are not called conduct.

(4) Is there not a similar distinction when we

pass from the biological to the psychological point of view? The actions which we call human, and which a man calls his own, do not simply secure an end, but they are *intended* to secure an end. They are "purposive" in a sense in which the actions of at least some of the lower animals are not purposive. No one thinks of calling an action his which he did not intend; it is the consciousness of a purpose that connects the act with the individual who does it. The "formula" must therefore once more submit to receive a new meaning. Those movements which are intended to secure the end of the complete development of life are the conduct with which ethics has to deal. This is virtually admitted by Mr. Spencer when he says that ethics deals with the form which conduct assumes in its later stages; for, unless on the ground that human conduct is different in kind from other conduct, the restriction is perfectly arbitrary.

Now, when it is admitted that ethics has to do only with that conduct on which moral judgments are passed, and, therefore, that there is a kind of conduct on which no moral judgments are passed, how can it any longer be said that to understand moral conduct it is necessary to consider conduct as a whole, and that the distinction between moral and non-moral conduct is one of degree, and not of kind? What is there in the conduct of beings

lower than man that is not exhibited more fully in human conduct? Admittedly, human conduct may be viewed from the physical point of view as a series of movements, and in its biological aspect it implies the due exercise of all the functions which minister to completeness of life. Hence it is difficult to see how any new factor can be learned from a consideration of life as a whole that cannot equally be learned from a consideration of human life. Surely it cannot be said that to discover the development of conduct from simplicity to complexity, we must trace it from its simplest to its most complex form; for this law of human development was discovered before the evolution of man from lower forms of being was ever thought of, and after its discovery we have still to show that the law applies to man. If it is said that we cannot understand human conduct without viewing it in relation to the simpler conduct of the lower animals, because the former has evolved from the latter, the answer is that on the same ground an ethical treatise ought to view human conduct in relation to the movements of nature which preceded animal movements, and out of which these were developed. The conclusion, then, to which we are led is, that, so far as the earlier forms of conduct go, nothing positive is to be learned in regard to the later forms, and hence that in an ethical treatise

the consideration of those earlier forms is a mere impertinence. But it is more than this; for the external point of view which leads Mr. Spencer to apply the same formula to the evolution of matter, of plants, of animals, and of men, tends to obscure the true nature of human conduct. Hence we find him at one time trying to find the value of human conduct by regarding it merely as a relatively complex series of movements, and again as the adaptation of the organism to its environment as the means of preserving life. In reality, we have not in either way of viewing it reached the special characteristic of conduct which makes it the subject of moral judgments, viz., that it consists of movements which not only subserve an end, but which are intended by the agent to subserve an end. To call human conduct later, or more complex, or better adapted, does not tell us why we pass moral judgments upon it. The first condition of such judgments being passed at all is, that the actions should be *intended* by the agent, and so should be attributed to the agent. It is for this reason, and not because they do not secure an end, that the movements of an epileptic in a fit cannot properly be called conduct. In the same sense, and for the same reason, the movements of a bird in building a nest for its young are not entitled to be called conduct, unless we hold that the

bird is *conscious* of seeking the well-being of its young.

2. We have seen, then, that we do not learn the true nature of human conduct by viewing it in relation to the conduct which, as less complex, is held to be that out of which it has gradually been evolved. But perhaps we may learn more by looking to the goal towards which conduct is progressing, and which, according to Mr. Spencer, it will finally assume. It is this final form of conduct, we are told, with which alone ethics properly has to deal, or which, at least, must first be determined before we can tell how we are to act in that imperfect form of society which at present exists. Unfortunately, Mr. Spencer has not given us a positive description of the final form of society, but has contented himself mainly with negative statements. In its ultimate form conduct will be perfectly definite, coherent, and heterogeneous; there will be a complete adaptation of the individual to society; there will be no external restraints; and there will be no pain. But none of these predicates tells us anything except that, in its final form, conduct will be different from what it now is.

To show how little is to be learned from such an abstraction as a perfectly developed form of society, let us take one or two of the predicates by which Mr. Spencer characterizes it. In the

ultimate form of society conduct will be perfectly "heterogeneous." Does this mean that there will be even a greater division of employments than exists at present? If so, will the conduct of the individuals composing society not be less heterogeneous than it now is, although society as a whole will be more heterogeneous? Is it meant, on the other hand, that each man will discharge more functions than he now discharges, that while the individual will be more heterogeneous in his conduct, society will be less heterogeneous? Again, when it is said that there will be a perfect adaptation of the individual to society, will this adaptation result from a simpler form of society, or from the greater development of the individual? If the latter, how can we put a term to that development and view any form of society as final? Must not every step in the evolution of society make greater and greater claims upon the individual, and make it impossible for all individuals to adapt themselves to the high level of intelligence reached by the few? Once more, will the development of society arise from an increased authority of the state, or from a superseding of the authority at present exercised? Mr. Spencer, as we learn from some of his other writings, would say that there will in the ideal state of society be less governmental interference with the individual than now prevails.

There will be no state education, or factory acts, or public works, the sole function of the state being apparently to give advice to the citizens.

It would take us too far out of our way to examine this conception of the state. But this, at least, we may say, that Mr. Spencer's ideal of the state is one that cannot be deduced from the abstract notion of society as perfectly heterogeneous, and as implying the perfect adaptation of the individual to society. It is quite conceivable that by providing for the better satisfaction of the lower wants, and preventing the tyranny of one class over another, the individual members of the state would be better able to develop intellectually and morally than if all were left to the play of individuality. In short, not having the gift of prophecy, no man can tell what form society will finally assume; the most that he can do is to imagine a condition of things in which some of the inequalities of society as it now exists would be done away with. Now, if we cannot foretell the final form of society, the code of conduct which Mr. Spencer sets forth under the head of Absolute Ethics has no value except as a reminder that society has not reached its final form. The aim of all action is, in short, the attainment of perfection; but this must be an ideal which can only be gradually realized in the progress of humanity

itself. Thus, as the result of Mr. Spencer's "scientific method," we have as residuum that very idea of perfection which he refuses to accept as the ultimate end.

3. Mr. Spencer's account of action, viewed from the side of the agent, seems to me imperfect. The question here is: Granting that we know the end of conduct, what is the motive which causes the individual to seek it? And as men may be acted upon by various motives, what is a truly good motive? All motives, according to Mr. Spencer, consist of mental presentations or representations combined with pleasurable or painful feelings. "The essential trait in the moral consciousness is the control of some feeling or feelings by some other feeling or feelings." And here, again, the formula of evolution is called into play, and we are told that motives are simple in the lowest animals and become more complex as evolution proceeds. The primary impulse is that of self-preservation. But experience shows that the actions to which it prompts are sometimes accompanied by pain. Hence when these actions are mentally pictured, they call up an idea of the attendant pains. The association becomes embodied in nervous structure, and is transmitted to the animal's offspring. As mind develops motives become more and more complex, the simpler being, as a rule, less authori-

tative than the more complex. This explains the virtue of prudence. A prudent man abstains from immediate gratification or submits to immediate pain, that he may secure a greater pleasure, or escape from a greater pain hereafter. And the results of his self-control and sagacity may be transmitted to his descendants. The same class of motives partly explains why the good of others is sought. The natural impulse to self-assertion is held in check by four prudential restraints: (1) fear of retaliation, (2) fear of legal punishment, (3) fear of divine vengeance, (4) fear of public opinion. The last three go on evolving as society evolves. These are not, however, truly moral sanctions. But the moral are evolved from them. How, then, is the transition made from enlightened self-interest to morality proper, involving when necessary the sacrifice of self? The moral restraints differ from the non-moral in this, that "they refer not to the extrinsic effects of actions, but to their intrinsic effects." Experience, then, teaches us the consequences of our actions, and the knowledge of them prompts us to refrain from the bad and to perform the good.

The essential weakness in this account of the origin of the moral sentiment is its failure to explain the idea of moral obligation. It seems that an action is not done from a right motive

unless that motive is the foresight of the natural consequences of the act. The motive is not moral when it consists in the representation of the punishment extrinsically connected with the act, but only when the act is done because of the consequences intrinsically connected with it. Suppose that a man is tempted to commit murder. If there arises in his imagination a picture of the unpleasant consequences connected with being hung, and he refrains from murder, his act is not moral. But if he pictures to himself the bad consequences which naturally flow from murder—the agony of the victim, the destruction of all his possibilities of happiness, the sufferings of all who belong him—and if there thus arises in his mind painful emotions which cause him to desist from his project, then his motive is a moral one.

Now, it is difficult to see how the one motive is any more moral than the other, so far as the agent is concerned. Mr. Spencer tells us that "the essential trait in the moral consciousness is the control of some feeling or feelings by some other feeling or feelings." But it is also Mr. Spencer's view that the feelings which arise in a man's mind are the concomitant of his modified nervous structure, and are received by him in the way of hereditary character. As then the more complex feelings, by the natural process of evolution, come to control the less com-

plex, why should it be said that one motive is more or less moral than another? One man, from inherited structure and from the peculiar environment in which he is placed, responds differently from another; but he has no power of making or unmaking the feelings which arise in his mind. How, then, can any *motive* be called either moral or immoral? Hume saw clearly that if an action is always determined by the feeling of pleasure which, to the individual, is strongest, no action can for the agent be either good or bad; and the elder utilitarians were consistent in saying that an act is good if it is done by the agent and brings good consequences, whatever may have been the motive by which it has been dictated. Mr. Spencer carries out neither side of his theory to its logical consequences. When he is comparing the actions of man with those of the lower animals, he makes the distinction one merely of degree, because both kinds of action tend to promote life. Good conduct he therefore regards as that which is fitted to produce the most perfect form of life. But when he passes to a consideration of conduct as viewed from the side of the agent, he begins to see that not only must an act be done purposely to have any moral character, but it must be done from a good motive. His imperfect analysis of the moral consciousness leads him to say that all action is

the consequence of the "control of one feeling by another feeling"; in other words, all action follows the strongest motive. The only difference, therefore, between men's actions is as to the kind of motive that to them is strongest, and as that depends upon their inherited disposition and the nature of the environment, what a man does is what he alone can do, and the distinction of moral and immoral motives is meaningless.

It is quite in accordance with this conclusion that Mr. Spencer regards the feeling of moral obligation as belonging only to an imperfect form of social development. For as the result of evolution is to supersede the external sanctions by the moral motive connected with a representation of the natural consequences of our conduct, a time will come when no one will have any desire to do what will bring unpleasant consequences with it. What is meant, of course, is, that as moral obligation implies the tendency to act contrary to the "constitution of things," the feeling of obligation must disappear when no one desires to do acts of that kind. Here Mr. Spencer is contemplating ideal men in an ideal society. But, as we have seen, it is not possible to form any definite notion of this golden age, and we must be content to deal with men as they now are. I think, however, that it may be shown that the idea of moral obligation

must always be retained by men of like nature with ourselves. Mr. Spencer's reason for rejecting the external sanctions—the religious, legal, and social—is because they *are* external. They operate, he thinks, purely by calling up in the individual the idea of pleasurable or painful consequences to *himself*. Now, there can be no doubt that if we represent religion as acting through the "representation of tortures in hell," the motive is a thoroughly immoral one. But neither religion nor any other of the external sanctions need act on the individual in that way. It is certainly possible for a man to conform outwardly to the forms of religion, and even to refrain from crime by the vivid representation of future punishment. Whether even such a man is not actuated by something higher than desire for his own freedom from pain, I shall not stay to inquire. But at least the religious sanction as it exists in the consciousness of the truly religious man is not dread of future punishment, but that "perfect love which casteth out fear." To call this identification of oneself with the infinite love a "dread of tortures in hell," is a gross caricature. Similarly, there are no doubt individuals who are deterred from doing wrong actions by the dread of legal punishment, or unwillingness to lose the esteem of their neighbours; but whatever we may say of such persons,

the good citizen does not obey the laws of his country because he pictures the unpleasant consequences to himself of disobedience, but because he regards obedience to them as a duty commanded by his own reason. And here we come upon the true origin of the idea of moral obligation. That idea is not, as Mr. Spencer supposes, a late product of the natural evolution of conduct. Man, even at the lowest stage of society, has had the consciousness of moral obligation. The essence of this consciousness is not the "control of one feeling by another feeling," but the consciousness that there is something which his own reason commands him to do. How otherwise could any authority command the assent of the community?

Mr. Spencer says that the truly moral motive is the feeling accompanying an idea of the natural consequences of an action. To this we entirely agree. But by "consequences" he means feelings of pleasure and pain, and from this we dissent. The consequences which must be taken into consideration are the influence of actions in tending to promote the complete development of man's nature. To the individual man the consequences of different acts are viewed in relation to the end of self-realization, and those acts which, as he believes, will lead to that end are pronounced to be morally right. To do a good act the following things are

necessary: (1) the conception of an object to be gained, or the idea of the self as in a more developed state than that in which it now exists; (2) the conception of the means towards the realization of that object; (3) the determination of oneself to the doing of the acts which constitute the means to the end. It is plain from this that, so long as there remains for man anything to be realized in the way of self-development, so long there must be the idea of moral obligation. Even granting, therefore, that the most perfect form of social organization were realized, the notion of moral obligation could not disappear. For if the individual man is to act at all, it must be because he contrasts his ideal with his real self, and this contrast implies the idea of duty. The notion of moral obligation is thus essential to the action of man, and its disappearance would at the same time be the disappearance of self-consciousness.

CHAPTER XI

HERBERT SPENCER (Concluded)

We have now to see how Mr. Spencer connects evolutionism with hedonism.

(1) Like other hedonists, he regards pleasure as the ultimate end. It is the only thing desired for its own sake. The pessimist as well as the optimist assumes that pleasure is intrinsically desirable, and he condemns life because the pleasure which is sought cannot be obtained. Life is thus regarded as desirable or undesirable according as it does or does not bring a "surplus of agreeable feeling." Conduct must be judged to be good or bad relatively to its consequences in the way of pleasure or pain. If gashes and bruises caused pleasure, should we regard assault in the same manner as at present? Would theft be counted a crime if picking a man's pocket excited in him joyful emotions? Conversely, should we regard ministering to the sick, or caring for the orphan

as good, if the result was to bring pain to the object of benevolence? Unquestionably, our ideas of goodness and badness originate from our consciousness of the certainty or probability that they will produce pleasures or pains somewhere.

(2) Granting pleasure to be the ultimate end, how is it to be obtained? Not by directly aiming at it, as the older utilitarians held, but by conforming to those principles which indirectly lead to it.

The goal of evolution is that perfect form of life in which there is a complete adjustment of acts to the end of the preservation of all living beings in the fulness of their activities. That this is the true end of life is confirmed by a glance at the leading moral ideas men have otherwise reached. How do we ordinarily distinguish between good and bad conduct? (*a*) A knife is said to be good which will cut, a good gun is one which carries far and true, a good house is one which yields the shelter, comfort, and accommodation sought for. (*b*) So in human actions which are morally indifferent, we call acts good or bad according to their success or failure. In all these cases we apply the term good and bad to what is well or ill adapted to achieve prescribed ends. (*c*) Why do we call conduct which calls forth moral judgments good or bad? Here also, although the truth is somewhat disguised, we pronounce an action to be good which

is adjusted to an end, and an action to be bad which is not adjusted to an end.

(α) Actions which tend to self-preservation are said to be good. The goodness ascribed to a man of business as such is measured by the activity and ability with which he buys and sells to advantage.

(β) So acts which are adapted to the preservation of offspring are good. A mother is called good who, ministering to all the physical needs of her children, attends also to their mental health; and a bad father is one who either does not provide the necessaries of life for his family, or otherwise acts in a manner injurious to their bodies or minds.

(γ) But it is especially to acts which further or hinder the complete living of others that we commonly apply the terms good and bad. "Goodness, standing by itself, suggests, above all other things, the conduct of one who aids the sick in re-acquiring normal vitality, assists the unfortunate to recover the means of maintaining themselves, defends those who are threatened with harm in person, property, or reputation, and aids whatever promises to improve the living of all his fellows." An act is called good, then, which is well adapted to fulfil a certain end. No doubt we call an act good from one point of view, and bad from another. But the discrepancy arises from our viewing the action relatively to different ends. A good man of business may be

condemned because of his hard treatment of dependents : his conduct, that is, is good relatively to the end of self-preservation, bad relatively to the end of the preservation of others. Looking back to our former study of the evolution of conduct, we see that the use of the terms good and bad is quite consistent. Good conduct is relatively more evolved conduct ; bad conduct that which is relatively less evolved. The tendency of evolution is to secure more and more the preservation of the individual and the species, and to further completeness of life in others ; while the most evolved conduct is that which simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of life in self, in offspring, and in fellow-men. Thus the ordinary judgments of men agree with the results reached by the independent study of conduct as a whole, and in its evolution.

To the method of egoistic hedonism there is the objection that a man's own pleasures and pains are incommensurable ; and to the method of universalistic hedonism there is the much more decided incommensurability of the pleasures and pains experienced by innumerable other persons, all differently constituted from one another. But although happiness is not the immediate aim of conduct, it is the ultimate aim, and there is a method by which it may be indirectly reached. The course of evolution is at once towards the most perfect

life and the greatest happiness, and hence it is possible "to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness." The correspondence between greatest pleasure and completeness of life is proved in this way. Before the rise of consciousness, we find that the movements of living beings are such as tend to their self-preservation. A plant which gets moisture by enveloping a buried bone with a plexus of rootlets, a potato which directs its blanched shoots towards a grating through which light comes into the cellar, and a polype which attaches itself by its tentacles to some animal substance, all exhibit movements which tend to their own preservation. Thus the beneficial act, and the act which there is a tendency to perform, are originally two sides of the same thing. Now, when consciousness arises, we cannot suppose that there is a sudden change in the kind of acts done; the only difference is that the acts which formerly were reflex movements are now done because the creature desires to do them. The pleasurable sensation is now the stimulus to the act.

The defect of all previous ethical systems seems to Mr. Spencer to be the entire absence or the inadequate presence of the idea of causation. The theological moralist, in saying that actions are right

or wrong simply in virtue of divine enactment, ignores the fact that by the very nature of things the result of certain acts is to increase the well-being of man, and of others to decrease that well-being. The political moralist holds that conduct is made good or bad by Act of Parliament, not seeing that conduct cannot be made good or bad by law, but that its goodness or badness is determined by its effects as naturally furthering, or not furthering, the lives of citizens. The intuitional moralist again, who affirms that we have an innate faculty or moral sense which directly tells us what actions are right or wrong, tacitly denies that there is any other way of knowing right from wrong, and thus denies any natural relations between acts and results.

But surely the utilitarian moralist cannot be accused of neglecting the ideal of natural causation! Bentham and Mill, for example, regard it as the distinguishing feature of utilitarianism that it values an action purely for its felicific consequences. Mr. Spencer finds, however, that even the utilitarian moralist does not recognize causation as completely as could be wished. For he bases his rules of conduct simply on the observation of the kinds of effects produced by certain actions in what he regards as a sufficient number of instances. But this at the most can only tell us what are the consequences of certain actions in society as at

present constituted. We wish however to know more than this; to know "what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness"; and such absolute rules of conduct must be deduced "from the laws of life and the conditions of existence." The question therefore is: What conduct *must* be beneficial, and what conduct *must* be detrimental? This question cannot be answered without showing that the good and bad results of conduct are not accidental, but are "necessary consequences of the constitution of things."

In illustration of the difference between the "empirical" method of utilitarianism and the "scientific" method of evolutionism, take the case of a man who suffers from want of proper nourishment. Suppose the man to be robbed of the fruits of his labour. The utilitarian would say, with Mill, that this violation of justice is found by experience to lead to an excess of pain over pleasure, and is therefore wrong. But the utilitarian does not trace the wrong back to its source in the "constitution of things." The true reason is to be found in the fact that the man in being robbed is prevented from getting proper food, and so suffers in health. The special cause which prevents a man from making up for the expenditure of energy by adequate nourishment is of no importance. What is important is the

fact that he is compelled to suffer in this way. If a labourer is paid partly in bad coin, or if his food is adulterated; if unjust laws prevent him from enforcing his claim, or if a bribed judge gives a false verdict; in all these cases the cause is to be found in the want of proper sustenance, just as much as if the man should be enfeebled from loss of blood, prevented from taking food on account of cancer of the oesophagus, deliberately starved to death, or insufficiently fed at the same time as he is forced by the whip to labour. And not only does injustice prevent the individual himself, but it may result in the injury or death of his children from under-feeding and inadequate clothing, and thus indirectly it tends to lower the life of society at large, which is damaged by whatever damages its units.

It would seem, then, that what Mr. Spencer means by charging all other moralists with neglect of the law of causation is, that they have not shown that an action is good or bad according as it does or does not minister to the preservation of self, of offspring, and of society in general.

That there must be this connection between life-preserving and pleasure-giving acts is plain, if we consider that only those races of beings can have survived in which on the whole pleasure is a concomitant of acts that tend to maintain life. For

if those acts which are done from desire for pleasure should result in injuring the agent, it must quickly disappear. The very existence of a race of beings is therefore a proof that on the average the pleasure-giving are also the life-sustaining acts. No doubt this is contrary to the current view, which rather regards unpleasant acts as good, and pleasant acts as bad. But the reason why people have thus divorced pleasure from goodness is because the striking exceptions to the rule have forced themselves on their notice. The drunkard, the gambler, and the thief, it is said, seek pleasure, and yet their actions are wrong; while the self-sacrificing relative, the worker who perseveres through weariness, and the honest man who stints himself to pay his way, do acts which are beneficial and yet are disagreeable.

It must, however, be remembered that even these undergo pain in consideration of remote and diffused pleasure, and that the severance of pleasure and goodness is but incidental and temporary. The reason why pleasure and morality are not always conjoined is that in the transition from one stage of social development to the next the adjustment of the feelings to the requirements is apt to be incomplete. Thus in the transition from the military to the industrial form of society, it is only natural that the conflict between the old and the

new feelings should give rise to pain. But in the ideal form of society the harmony between pleasure and beneficial action will be so perfect that every one will do what is right because he will spontaneously desire to do it. We conclude, then, that while the ultimate end is greatest pleasure, the practical rule is to do that which tends to further completeness of life. The difference between Mr. Spencer and other utilitarians is not in the object aimed at, but in the manner in which the object is sought to be attained.

(3) Granting that pleasure is the end, and that this end will be best furthered by aiming at completeness of life, we have to ask whether the pleasure which is the end is the agent's own greatest pleasure, or the greatest pleasure on the whole. Mr. Spencer virtually answers that these two are ultimately identical. We cannot have the perfect man except in the perfect state. But while the good of all, including the agent, is the end, we may still ask whether that end will be best realized by the individual directly seeking his own good, or directly seeking the common good. Mr. Spencer lays great stress on the importance of every man seeking for the most complete life for himself. The man who neglects his own well-being is really decreasing the sum of happiness in the community as well as his own. A man

cannot cut himself off from others. "The pursuit of individual happiness within those limits prescribed by social conditions is the first requisite to the attainment of the greatest general happiness." After balancing the claims of egoism and altruism, Mr. Spencer comes to the conclusion that "general happiness is to be achieved mainly through the adequate pursuit of their own happiness by individuals"—a conclusion which concides with that of Bentham and other utilitarians.

One or two remarks may be made on the hedonism of Mr. Spencer.

(1) In his proof that completeness of life is aimed at as a means to the ultimate end of pleasure, Mr. Spencer appeals to the ordinary judgments of men as shown in their use of the terms "good" and "bad."

(*a*) Things and actions are called good when they secure an end, bad when they do not secure an end, and they are called morally good when they further completeness of life in self, offspring, or fellow-men. Now, in thus assimilating things and actions, the characteristic difference of human action is left out of account. No doubt we call a thing good which is fitted to secure an end, but we never call an action morally good unless it not only secures an end, but was intended to secure an end. So far as Mr. Spencer's account

of the matter goes, the cutting of bread by a knife ought to come under the head of "conduct" since it achieves the purpose for which it was intended. But if such unconscious movements are not actions, our reason for calling the actions of men conduct must be because, as done by the individual with a certain end in view, they proceed from his will and are to be attributed to him. Nor is it enough to distinguish between unconscious and conscious movements; but to get the full meaning contained in the word "good," as popularly applied in the way of moral praise, we must add that not only is it applied exclusively to purposed actions, but it is applied solely to purposed actions which are the means to a good end. It is not correct to contrast good and bad conduct as respectively conduct which attains or does not attain an end. The burglar, who is an artist in his vocation, may achieve the end he has in view better than the honest but bungling mechanic. It is therefore not the fact of achieving what is aimed at that constitutes the character of a moral action. What, then, is it? Mr. Spencer tells us that it is completeness of life. If this means that the end is the realization of all a man's capabilities, it may be accepted as the end. But we must observe that this end is not one which can be attained unless it is made the end

by the agent. Not only must the end be good, but it must be sought because it is good. A man who does an act because it is customary is not morally on the same level as the man who does the same act because he judges it to be right. For it is not possible that there should be complete realization of the man's nature unless he has negated his individual self, and identified his good with the higher or ideal self. The man who lives a life of custom is still in bondage to the flesh, just because he has not reached up to the liberty of reason. The motive to an action must be good as well as the end which is sought. A motive in fact is just the good end taken up into the consciousness of the individual and made *his* end. Now this is what Mr. Spencer, like other utilitarians, cannot admit. Not seeing that the true end of all action is the development of the rational or self-conscious nature, he seeks for an explanation of morality in something external.

Hence (*b*) we find Mr. Spencer saying that completeness of life is not the ultimate, but only the proximate end. The true end is pleasure, and life is valued, as even the pessimist is constrained to admit, not for itself but for the pleasure it brings.

Now, in the first place, it is not necessary for the pessimist to admit that pleasure is the end,

because it may be shown that it is not the end. Pessimism merely affirms that on the whole life brings more pain than pleasure, but it does not necessarily affirm that life exists purely for the sake of pleasure.

Secondly, when Mr. Spencer tells us that life is a means to pleasure, he is evidently thinking of life in the narrow sense of sentient existence. Well-being, as Aristotle said, presupposes being; a man cannot live *well* unless he *lives*. But Mr. Spencer has now forgotten that the end at which we are directly to aim is not physical being, but "completeness of life." Just consider what is implied in the latter. To live a "complete life" is to have all the bodily functions in perfect order and efficiency; to have the intellect trained and disciplined; to have the will under control of reason and always determining itself to good ends. All this, according to Mr. Spencer, is merely the means to an end lying beyond it; it is not perfection of nature but the securing of pleasure, which is the end. At the same time it is admitted that not every pleasure is a good, but only that pleasure which comes as the result of aiming at the good of all. In other words, the only genuine pleasure is that which accompanies the moral life. If so, manifestly in aiming at completeness of life or morality, pleasure, in the only sense in which

it is worth having, is an invariable accompaniment. But it cannot be obtained *unless* we aim at completeness of life. Now, that which is an accompaniment of action directed to another end than itself, and which cannot be secured if it is aimed at, cannot be called the ultimate end of action. The moral man does not aim at it; and the immoral man who does aim at it cannot obtain it; hence it cannot be the end which ought to be aimed at. Completeness of life includes the only truly desirable pleasure as a part, and it is manifestly absurd to say that we aim at the whole merely in order to obtain the part. The axiom that the whole is greater than the part is a fundamental law of thought.

(2) Mr. Spencer would of course reply, that while pleasure cannot be obtained by being directly sought, it is none the less the only desirable end. And to this view he gives plausibility by seeking to connect pleasure-giving with life-preserving actions. In this argument he simply assumes pleasure to be the end, and then goes on to infer that that conduct which, on the whole, yields most pleasure is at the same time the conduct which tends to completeness of life. But this is to confuse the desirable with the pleasurable. That which is desirable must no doubt bring satisfaction with it, but the satisfaction is simply

the reflex of the doing of actions which, as making for the development of the higher nature, are regarded by the agent as morally good. When a man desires to obtain health, or culture, or goodness, he values these not as means to pleasure, but as means to self-realization. To make the pleasure accompanying the realization of self the end, is to open the way to selfishness more or less refined. Nothing can be more immoral than to make all things in heaven and earth the means of securing agreeable sensations. No man who adopts that point of view—and it is the only consistent point of view for the pure hedonist—will really further the truly moral end of self-development. What Mr. Spencer really proves is, not that in the ideal form of society, men in aiming at pleasure will be led to do acts morally good, but that in aiming at moral goodness they will at the same time obtain happiness.

(3) When Mr. Spencer says that the good of the individual is ultimately identical with the good of all, he enunciates a most important truth. But when he identifies good, special and general, with pleasure, he makes the former proposition unintelligible. Mill found it necessary to give a "proof" of the utilitarian end, intended to show how we may pass from the pleasure of the individual to the pleasure of all. Mr. Spencer does

not seem to have even seen the necessity of such a proof. Hence he assumes that greatest pleasure on the whole is the end, and merely asks how best it may be attained. Egoism he therefore regards as the kind of conduct which, indirectly aiming at universal pleasure, directly aims at individual pleasure; altruism, as the kind of conduct which, directly aiming at the good of others, secures the good of the agent as well. But the question is not how universal good may best be obtained, but whether it is the end that ought to be sought. Now the only reason the hedonist can give for his assumption is that each man desires his own pleasure; and from this, as we saw in examining Mill's proof, we cannot infer that he ought to desire the pleasure of all. Granting pleasure, and pleasure alone, to be what is sought, we cannot show that, where individual and common good conflict, a man ought to prefer the greater pleasure of all to greater pleasure for himself. Such a distinction introduces an order of considerations that have no place in a consistent hedonism. When we interpret general good as equivalent to complete realization of human nature, we are entitled to say that a man must not seek his own good to the exclusion of the general good, since to do so is to fail in the realization of his higher self. But, unless on the

supposition that no man can get more pleasure for himself by selfish than by unselfish action, to make pleasure the end is to destroy the idea of common good. Now Mr. Spencer does not hold that, under present conditions, it is impossible to obtain more pleasure for oneself by neglecting the pleasure of all, but only that in an ideal society this will be the case. As, however, we have not to do with ideal men but with men as they are, he cannot show that a man will now get more pleasure by self-sacrifice than by selfishness, and hence his ethical doctrine fails in the cardinal point of showing how conduct subserving the universal good is binding upon us.

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5 "Such a critical account of hedonism."—Spencer's *Data of Ethics*, § 10, p. 27.

CHAPTER II.

31 "No reason," he says, "can be given."—Mill's *Utilitarianism*, ch. 4, p. 53.

CHAPTER III.

58 "When the stranger," says Seneca, "comes."—Wallace's *Epicureanism*, ch. 3, p. 48.

63 "The giver should not expect."—Bain's *Emotions and Will*, p. 299.

CHAPTER IV.

77 "His aim was . . . to 'pass between the points.'"—Hobbes' *Works*, III., Dedication.

77 "That great Leviathan."—*Ibid.*, Introduction, p. ix.

77 "The weakest has strength enough."—*Ibid.*, ch. 22, p. 110.

81 "The savage people in many places."—*Ibid.*, ch. 22, p. 114.

CHAPTER V.

96 "If we will disbelieve everything."—Locke's *Essay*, I., § 5.

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